

A

COMPREHENSIVE VIEW  
OF THE  
*REAL CHRISTIAN'S*  
CHARACTER,  
PRIVILEGES, AND OBLIGATIONS:

BEING  
The Substance of a COURSE of SERMONS on the EIGHTH  
CHAPTER of St. PAUL'S EPISTLE to the ROMANS.

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*BY THE REV. T. BRYSON.*

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I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the MERCIES of God, that ye  
present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,  
which is your reasonable service. ROM. xii. 1.

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THE SECOND EDITION,  
REVISED AND CORRECTED.

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1795.



CONTRIBUTIVE VIEW

REAL CHRISTIANITY

CHARACTER

TRUTH



BY THE

I have been thinking of you, and of the many of our kind  
people who are doing good, and who are doing it  
with a noble and generous spirit.

THE SECOND EDITION

REVISED AND CORRECTED

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TO THE  
CHURCH AND CONGREGATION  
ASSEMBLING IN THE  
NEW ROAD, St. GEORGE'S IN THE EAST;  
THE FOLLOWING ABSTRACTS  
OF  
A COURSE OF SERMONS  
DELIVERED UNTO THEM,  
ARE  
HUMBLY PRESENTED  
AS A  
SMALL TESTIMONY OF SINCERE GRATITUDE,  
AND OF  
AFFECTIONATE CONCERN  
FOR THE PROMOTION OF  
THEIR SPIRITUAL INTERESTS,  
BY  
THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,  
AND  
HUMBLE SERVANT,  
THE AUTHOR.





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A

COMPREHENSIVE VIEW

OF THE

REAL CHRISTIAN'S

CHARACTER, &c.

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ROM. viii. 1.

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.*

THE Apostle having, in the preceding chapters, copiously explained, and solidly proved, the important doctrine of free justification through the atonement and righteousness of the Lord Christ, proceeds in this chapter to administer strong consolation to the heirs of promise. This he does by presenting, in an animating manner, their exalted prerogatives, resulting from vital union with Christ, and their consequent communion with him in all the fruits of his life, death, and intercession. From the sublimest truths, and the most valuable privileges, he infers and inforces the sacred obligations of the real Christian to glorify his God in body

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and spirit, which are God's. In this procedure, the apostle is a very proper pattern for the imitation of ministers. *They* should study to be helpers of their people's joy, and stir up their pure minds to walk in every respect worthy of their Christian vocation.

The verse now to be considered, presents to our view,

I. An invaluable privilege—*Exemption from condemnation.*

II. A description of the persons whose privilege this is—*such who are in Christ, and known to be so by their walk, walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit.* Let us consider these in this order :

1. The invaluable privilege here mentioned : *Exemption from condemnation.* Condemnation is a judicial sentence, dooming to punishment. The penalty threatened by God's holy law, for sin, is, *eternal death*, Rom. vi. 23. *The soul that sinneth shall die*, Ezek. xviii. 20. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.* To this dreadful penalty man becomes obnoxious upon his commission of sin. And as *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Rom. iii. 23), so of course, all are in a state of condemnation. *He that believeth not is condemned already. The wrath of God abideth upon him*, John iii. 18. 36. Some distinguish between the sentence of the law and the sentence of the judge. The former has been pointed out; the latter denotes the solemn ratification of the former by the great God, first in the sinner's conscience often in this life; next in the hour of death; and, lastly,

lastly, in the day of general judgment; *for God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness*, Acts xvii. 31. Then will he appear in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on the wicked, whom he will command with irresistible authority *to depart as accursed to everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*, Mat. xxv. 41. O! what a fearful thing must it be *to fall into the hands of the living God!* Heb. x. 31. And what an unspeakable privilege must security from his wrath be!

Now, this is the happy portion of the real Christian. Whatever else there is for him, eternal praise to God! there is no condemnation. He is effectually delivered from, and secured against, the wrath which is to come. The negatives to which our attention has been called by good men, on this subject, are not unworthy of our attention, especially of the weak in faith. For instance, 'tis not said, There are no *fears* of condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Many of God's people are fearful, and of little faith. Nor is it said, There is no *molestation* from *in-dwelling* sin to them that are in Christ Jesus. The apostle himself complains, in the preceding chapter, of a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and occasionally captivating him. Nor is it said, There are no *accusations* against them who are in Christ Jesus. On the contrary, conscience, wicked men, and Satan, the accuser of the brethren, all concur at times to accuse the people of God; and none of them have been *entirely* exempt from them. Nor is it said, There are no *afflictions*,



nor *temptations*, to them that are in Christ Jesus; for indeed *many* are the afflictions of the righteous; and often are they in heaviness through manifold temptations. But the consolatory truth positively asserted, is, that there is no condemnation for the real Christian. The text, literally translated, informs us, that "There is not *one* condemnation," &c. alluding, probably, to the divine persons in the adorable Trinity. There can be none from God the FATHER, for it is God that justifieth; nor from God the SON, seeing that he lived, died, rose, and revived, that his people might be eternally secured from it; nor can there be any from God the HOLY GHOST, for it is his office to testify to the believer's conscience that there is none; and he can neither bear false witness, nor contradict his gracious office. And as there is no condemnation for the believer from God, there can be none from any other; for who can condemn whom God justifies?

Two things claim our attention under this head:—The *origin* of this immunity,—and the *time* of its commencement.

1. The *origin* of this immunity. It is in consequence of something to which the relative term, *therefore*, refers us. The inferences formed in sacred scripture do not always refer to the *immediately* preceding antecedent. For instance, it would not be proper to infer from the apostle's complaints of remaining depravity, in the *former* chapter, that therefore there is no condemnation, &c. Rather he refers us to the contents of the third, the fourth, and the fifth chapters,

chapters, which explicitly inform us of the atonement and righteousness of Christ as the sole procuring causes of our freedom from condemnation. Christ, as the representative of his people, atoned for their sins by offering up himself a sacrifice without spot to God, and thus redeems them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. And, as freedom from condemnation necessarily supposes an additional privilege, namely, a title to eternal life, so, by the perfect obedience accomplished by Christ, and placed by an act of sovereign grace to the account of his people, this title is secured to them. On *these* accounts it is that there is no condemnation to *real* believers. But when is this security enjoyed? We are informed,

2. That the *time* of its commencement is the *present*. Now, there is no condemnation. Even *now*, notwithstanding the sinful infirmities with which they are oppressed, and the numerous enemies by whom they are surrounded. On this subject many err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God, and suppose it to be nothing short of the grossest presumption to pretend to security from wrath to come, and a certain hope of heaven. But this grand truth is what scripture plainly and positively asserts, not only in the text, but in many other places. Such as, John iii. 36. "He that believeth *bath* eternal life." John v. 24. "Is *passed* from death unto life." Acts xiii. 39. "All that believe *are justified*." 1 John iii. 2. "Now are we the sons of God." These are the true sayings of God, and we ought to

believe God rather than man. And, indeed, if this blessing be not enjoyed in the present life, it never can be enjoyed at all, for "there are no acts of pardon pass'd in the cold grave, to which we haste." The happy experience of every true believer is an everlasting confutation of the silly objections of baptized infidels, which prove nothing but their ignorance and total want of this divine privilege. But who are the highly favoured persons exempted thus from condemnation? We are informed, under our

Ild head, They are such who are *in Christ*, and known to be so by their walk, walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

1. They are *in Christ* by a *virtual* and a *vital* union. The former may be illustrated by that which, upon the constitution of the covenant of works with Adam, subsisted between him and all his posterity. In that appointment Adam was the constituted head and representative of all mankind, who by that constitution are *virtually* in him, prior to their existence. Just so are the people of God *virtually* in Christ, prior, not only to their *conversion*, but to their *creation*. In the covenant of grace he became responsible for them, and engaged to perform every requisition for their recovery and eternal salvation. By this act of voluntary substitution he became their covenant head, and from that period they were considered as being *in him*.

*Vital* or *actual* union with Christ takes place in time, and is a fruit of the former. As Adam's posterity by natural birth become ac-  
tual



tual branches of him, the degenerate vine in whom all die ; so, by a spiritual or new birth, do the people of Christ become actual branches of him the true vine, and partake of his quickening spirit. Various similitudes are formed of this union, the defects of one being partly supplied by the excellencies of another. As subjects they are under him as their King ; as living stones they are built on him the sure foundation ; as a beloved spouse, they are conjugally united to him ; as fruitful branches they are implanted, and as mystical members they are incorporated into him. He dwells in believers, and they in him, John vi. 56. He abides in them, and they in him, John xv. 4. He is in them the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. And they are in him that is true, in Jesus Christ, 1 John v. 20. He lives in them, and they live by the faith of him, Gal. ii. 20. He partakes with them, Heb. ii. 14. And they partake of him, Heb. iii. 14. Eternal life is in him ; and they having the Son, have life, 1 John v. 11, 12. He is one *flesh* with them, and they are one *spirit* with him. Thus it is obvious there is a real union between them. Now they who are thus in Christ are known to be so,

2. By their *walk*, walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. The terms *flesh* and *spirit* import the governing principles in the hearts of different men, derived by either a first or a second birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," said our Lord to Nicodemus, John iii. 6. that is, by ordinary genera-

tion, the depravity of human nature consequent on Adam's fall, here called *flesh*, is communicated, and becomes the governing principle of unregenerate men. "But that which is born of the spirit is spirit;" that is, by a spiritual birth, or regeneration, a divine principle is imparted, here called spirit, and becomes a governing principle in the hearts of the truly converted. Thus men are distinguished by their being either in the flesh or in the spirit.

To *walk* after the flesh, or after the spirit, is to be *actually influenced* in temper, disposition, and conduct, by these opposite principles. They impel to such actions as correspond to their nature. They that are after the flesh will favour the things of the flesh, and they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit. Such as the tree is, such will be the fruit. By their fruits, therefore, men may be known. It is not, you perceive, by occasional *acts*, but habitual *walk*, that men's predominant principles can be known. *Acts* sometimes are performed contrary to the ruling principles of both good and bad men. Christ is the root of the former; and if the root be holy, so are, and necessarily must be, the branches. From what has been observed, we are taught,

1. The established and beautiful connexion subsisting between privilege and practice, in the divine plan of a sinner's salvation. Security from condemnation, you perceive, is connected with pious walking according to the direction, dictates, and assistance, of the Holy Spirit. The gospel frees from enemies, and the hand of all them that hate us, that we may serve

serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. It calls us into liberty, but prohibits our using our liberty for an occasion to the flesh. When *peace* is imparted to the conscience, *purity* is produced in the heart.— Consequently we learn,

2. That such as walk according to the flesh, or in the ways of *sin*, have *no evidence* of interest in Christ. Whoever lives under the *power* of sin is under its *guilt*. To all who are *not* in Christ there is condemnation; and every finally impenitent sinner will be fully convinced of this shortly. May you take the friendly warning now offered, and flee from the wrath to come!

Lastly, As the believer's privileges lay him under indispensable obligations to live becoming the gospel he professes, let him, for this purpose, be concerned to *enjoy* by faith his privileges. Is it so, that, by the death of your divine Friend, you are for ever secured from eternal death, and entitled to eternal life?— That whatever *bonds* and *afflictions* abide you in *this* life, there are no chains of darkness, nor eternal wailing, for you in *that* which is to come? Rejoice in this; and consider your present afflictions *light*, and their duration *momentary*. Study and endeavour to shew forth *his* praise who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.



Ver. 2.

*For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

TWO objects the Apostle had presented to our view in the preceding verse—an invaluable *privilege*; and a *description* of the persons interested in that privilege. Now it is obvious, that this verse is produced as a proof (exemplified in the apostle himself) of *one* of those objects; but of *which*, it is not quite easy to determine. Some connect these words with the *privilege*, others with the *description*, as a substantial reason, either why there is no condemnation to them in Christ, or why true believers walk not after the flesh but after the spirit; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ hath made them free from the law of sin and death. We shall attempt *so* to explain these words, as to justify their application to either of the presented objects.

Here is law opposed to law; and the one freeing from the other. It will be proper to inquire into,

- I. The *meaning* of these different laws;
- II. The manner *how* one frees from the other.

1. The *meaning*, &c. We shall be assisted in our inquiry by attending to one made by the apostle, chap. iii. 37. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.* Now, when the salvation

tion of a sinner is the subject, it is easy to understand the import of *that law* by which it is accomplished, and which for ever excludes boasting. What is this, but that which at other times is called, "the gospel of the grace of God," the sum and substance of which is Christ, in his person, offices, and grace? This gospel, in the estimation of some judicious divines, is what we are to understand by the "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." It is called a *law* in reference to *Christ*, for what is *gospel* to *us* was *law* to *him*; the covenant of grace being nothing more than Christ's performing for us the covenant of works. And it is the law of the "spirit of life," because it was engraven by the eternal Spirit on the heart of the Lord our Righteousness. Psalm xl. 8. And furthermore, because by that ministry, which exhibits the demands of the divine law under the form of a covenant of works, to be fully accomplished by the Saviour, the Spirit is ordinarily imparted to sinners for the purposes of their union to Christ, and gradual preparation for the unutterable joys of heaven, agreeable to Gal. iii. 2.

By the "law of sin and death" we are to understand the *same* law, only in a *different relation*. In its relation to an unbelieving sinner, considered in his *own* person, it is a law of sin and death. But where, say you, is the propriety of these terms? Is it safe to call God's holy law, a law of sin and death?—Accept of this answer to your inquiries.

The moral law of God may be called the law of sin, not by the least *connivance* of it.

This is impossible. But, 1. Because it *discovers* sin. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.* ch. iii. 20. *I had not, saith the apostle, known sin but by the law.* ch. vii. 7. 2. Because through the horrid perversity of the corrupt hearts of men, *occasion* is taken, from the restraints imposed by this law, to rush on with greater impetuosity in the commission of sin. Sin, taking *occasion* by the *commandment*, works in unconverted sinners all manner of concupiscence, ch. vii. 8. Just as some profane wretches, when reprov'd for their enormities, *thence* take occasion to *double* them. It may also be called "the law of death," because it has united in bonds inseparable sin with death. *The soul that sinneth shall die*; that is, be eternally separated from God, the fountain of happiness; for as the *body* without the *spirit* is dead, so the *soul* without *God* is dead also. This is the *first* sense in which these laws may be understood.

In the opinion of others, these terms import the opposite principles of *grace* and *sin*; the "law of the spirit of life" being only another term for the *power* of the sanctifying spirit of Christ, by which his people are freed—not from *sin*, but from the *law of sin*, that is, the predominant *love* and *power* of it. The *power* of sin is intimated by the term *law*; for as a law hath dominion over a man by means of certain promises and threatenings, so hath sin, promising pleasure and profit to its deluded votaries, and threatening those who disobey its mandates with various imaginary inconveniences. Thus it maintains its power over thousands. But, whatever sin *promises*, *death*



is what it *pays*. "Sin when finished bringeth forth death;" and for this reason it is called a law of *death*. This is the second sense of these terms.

Of these two senses you are at liberty to adopt which you please. I see no impropriety in admitting both. If we adopt the *first* sense; we must then connect it with the glorious privilege of exemption from condemnation; and consider it as a reason for this exemption, because "the law of the spirit of life," that is, the gospel of the grace of God, frees true believers from the impossible obligations of the law as a covenant of works. If we adopt the *second* sense, we have then a substantial reason assigned *why* believers walk, not after the flesh but after the spirit; for the power of the sanctifying spirit of life, in Christ, hath set them free from the power of sin, which tendeth unto death. X Thus you will easily understand,

II. The manner *how* the one of these laws frees from the other.

1. The *covenant of grace* frees believers from the obligations of the *covenant of works*. These obligations were *two-fold*: *Suffering* the penalty threatened; and *obedience* of the duties enjoined. *Absolute perfection* in both is also demanded. Every man *under* the law is a debtor to do the *whole* law, both in the penal and preceptive part thereof. Gal. v. 3. Now it is obvious, that, on these terms, no flesh living could be justified before God, and escape his vengeance. Man is totally corrupt, and absolutely helpless: Lost, *irrecoverably* lost, with regard to what *he* can do for his salvation. In this forlorn condition,  
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the Prince of Grace, with pitying eye, beheld man's helpless grief. *Love*, passing knowledge, prompted him to resolve man's deliverance.—Conscious of the immutable moral obligation of the divine law, and the inflexibility of divine justice, he engaged to satisfy, fully, the demands of both, as the requisite conditions of man's salvation. Both he hath fully satisfied, and graciously transfers to his people the fruit of both. *Thus* he delivers from the curse of the law, and from the obligation of (what was impossible for man to accomplish) *perfect* obedience as a title to life. This is the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. If the *Son* make you free, you shall be free indeed. Is not this a satisfactory reason why there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ?

2. The grace of Christ frees his people from the *dominion* of sin. *Sin*, as a powerful tyrant, tyrannises with despotic and cruel authority over the sons of men. It laughs to scorn every *human* effort to dethrone it. Sickness and horror have often extorted resolutions from sinners, unconscious of their inability, to shake off their fetters. But, alas! on their recovery and deliverance, they have proved themselves to be its slaves as much as ever. Perhaps, to compensate for the partial and temporary interruption which the commands of sin have received by the sinner's sickness, it imposes, upon his recovery, a *double* task, and hurries him on with redoubled impetuosity to perpetrate all uncleanness with greediness. And whither does its dominion tend?—*Eternal death.*

*Sin*

*Sin reigneth unto death, Rom. v. 21. This is its sure reward.*

But the power of divine grace delivers real Christians—I say not from *sin*, but from the *law* of sin. And this *latter* deliverance is in consequence of the *former*, as the apostle teaches, ch. vi. 14. *Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* Their old man is crucified, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin. Rom. vi. 6. And this exertion of sanctifying power from Christ sufficiently accounts for his people's walking, not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Hence learn,

1. The *unchangeable moral obligation* of the divine law. *Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the law.* Rom. iii. 31. We establish its honour and immutable obligations *as a covenant of works* by maintaining the absolute necessity of the Redeemer's obedience and death in conformity to its demands. We establish it as a *rule*, directive of our moral obligations towards God and man, by insisting on the necessity of the sanctifying operation of the divine Spirit.—Believers become dead to the law as a *covenant*, that they may live unto God in evangelic obedience to his law as a rule. Gal. ii. 19. Observe this distinction, my brethren; reduce your knowledge into practice; and avoid the error of those, who boast of being *lawless*, and thus glory in their shame. I would, in the

2d place, Remind the thoughtless and profane amongst you, that, in my text, sin and death—



death—the bitter pains of eternal death!—are inseparably linked together. One is the *cause*, of which the other is the *effect*; and what man of common sense would expect the removal of the effect without a previous removal of the cause? Where *sin* goes before, *misery* is sure to follow after. Consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. Ps. l. 20. Fly to the refuge, which the gospel presents. In it there is mercy to pardon, and grace to purify; and *both* must be enjoyed, before you can arrive at heaven.

Lastly, let the believer triumphantly rejoice in his deliverance from the above formidable evils. Your freedom from the guilt and power of sin, by the blood and grace of Christ, eternally secures you from wrath to come.—Rejoice in this, and give the undivided honour of it to your incarnate God. O! supplicate with a fervour, suited to your need, those divine influences by which alone you can rightly know, and comfortably enjoy, your privileges; and let heart, lip, and life, harmonize in shewing forth his praise who hath called and secured you unto his eternal kingdom and glory!

## Ver. 3.

*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*

THESE words may be considered as a *reason* assigned by the Apostle for his, and every true believer's deliverance, by "the law of the spirit of life," from "the law of sin and death:" Because it was impossible for the *latter* (considered as the violated covenant of works) to deliver from the guilt and dominion of sin; and therefore by the *former only* could this deliverance be effected; God, in his glorious gospel, appearing as the *sole* Author of his people's eternal salvation, by *sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemning sin in the flesh.*

In our text we have,

I. The *inability* of the law asserted to accomplish a *certain work*, and a reason assigned for that inability. There is a *something*, which the law *could not do*; and the *reason is*, because it is *weak through the flesh*.

II. We are informed by *whom* the work referred to is accomplished, and the *means* employed for its accomplishment. God hath done what the law could not do, by *sending his own Son*, &c.

A proper consideration of these interesting points of doctrine, has a direct tendency to  
humble

humble the pride of man, and teach him to ascribe the whole glory of salvation to the sovereign, rich, and free grace of God through Christ Jesus.—They consequently deserve our serious consideration.

I. The *inability* of the law, &c. With regard to the work *referred to*, which the law could not do,—from the denial of ability in the law *for*, and the account of the sole *author* and means *of* its accomplishment,—'tis obvious that it can be no other than that of—*man's redemption*. This, of all works the most important, comprises, 1. *The full and free pardon of all sin*. Sin must be either *pardoned*, or *punished*. No medium between these. 2. *A perfect righteousness* in which to appear before God. The *unrighteous* shall not inherit his kingdom, 1 Cor. vi. 9. 3. *Holiness of heart and life*: For *without holiness* no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14. 4. *Adoption into the family of God*. Heaven is the inheritance of *his children* only. If *children*, THEN *heirs*, v. 17. And, lastly, *Preservation by the power of God through faith unto final salvation*.

Now, can the *law* do all this for a *sinner*? No, saith the Apostle, (*to adunaton*) it is *impossible*. Neither *moral* nor *ceremonial* law can do this. The *latter*, being only a *shadow* of good things to come, and not the *very image* of the things, could never make the comers thereunto perfect as pertaining to the conscience; for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin, Heb. x. 1. 4. And the *former* (which is principally intended) is so far from succouring miserable man,



man, that it *convince*s him of *sin*, chap. iii. 20. —works *wrath* in his conscience, chap. iv. 15. —and as a school-master, drives him for salvation to Christ, Gal. iii. 24. who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, chap. x. iv. If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by that law, Gal. iii. 21. But that *no such* law exists, to which man has an adequate righteousness, by which he might claim life, is plain from the *necessity* of the Redeemer's life and death for the salvation of men. For, could sinners have performed the righteousness demanded by the divine law, Christ would have died in vain. And none can attempt to save himself by his *own* imaginary righteousness, without attempting at the same time to *frustrate* the grace of God, Gal. ii. 21.

But, *whence* originates the inability of the law to save man?—It is *weak*, saith the apostle, *through the flesh*. That is, in consequence of the *universal corruption* of human nature. Could the law find a *sinless* character,—it would be found amply sufficient to make *that* character eternally happy. But, alas! *no* such character is to be found. *All* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Were God to mark the iniquities of the best on earth, the best on earth *could not stand* before Him, Psalm cxxx. 3. We all have need to beg of God not to enter into judgment with us, for in *His* sight no flesh living can be justified. This inability of the law to save *fallen* man, is so far from implying any *defect* in it, that it redounds

doounds to its eternal honour, as being *incapable* of conniving at *any* sin, or of abating the *least* of its most righteous demands. And as it is weak “*only* through the flesh, it is obvious that it *can* honourably acquiesce in the redemption of sinners by the blood of Jesus.” Let us now consider,

II. The *Author* by whom, and the *means* by which, the great work of man's Redemption is accomplished.

1. The *Author* is God. God hath done *what the law could not do*. “Salvation is of the Lord, and of the Lord alone. In this great work he displays, 1. *The infinite riches of his mercy*. God is *rich* in mercy, Ephes. ii. 4. *Abundant* in mercy, 1 Pet. i. 3. His mercy is *from everlasting to everlasting*, Psalm ciii. 17. And through the *tender* mercy of our God the Day-spring from on high hath visited us, Luke i. 78. 2. *The greatness of His love*. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, 1 John iii. 16. What manner of love is this! 3. *The unfathomable depths of his wisdom*,—in concerting *such* a plan for the salvation of guilty man as effectually to secure that gracious design, in *perfect harmony* with the *glory* of all his divine attributes. The gospel glorifies God in the highest, in the diffusion of peace on earth, and good-will to the sons of men, Luke ii. 14. O! the depth of the riches of the wisdom, grace, and love of God! Eternal praise to His ever-  
blessed

blessed name, for these divine discoveries! What solid consolation do these convey to the troubled conscience! Blessed are the people who *know* the joyful sound! And how does our gracious God *execute* his merciful design of man's redemption?

2. *By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemning sin in the flesh.* The person sent, is—*his own Son.*—Waving at present the reasons of this appellation, we request your attention to what it *implies*. 1. *That He existed prior to his being sent.* Before Abraham was, saith He, I AM, John viii. 58. Divines have inferred hence the *self-existence* and *proper eternity* of Jesus Christ, and have illustrated His claim, and defended their doctrine, from Exod. iii. 14. *And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM.* This title, if I mistake not, is generally acknowledged to be expressive of the Essence and Eternity of the true God. 2. *That he is a distinct Person from the Father.* All the privileges and duties of Christianity are built on the *personal distinctions* and *offices* of the Father, Son, and Spirit; and therefore the denying such a distinction, necessarily destroys at once the faith and comfort, the worship and obedience, of the saints. 3. *His possessing the same nature with the eternal Father.* He is the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts, Zech. xiii. 7. and thought it no robbery, but his indisputable right, to be accounted equal with God, Phil. ii. 6. He and the Father being one, John x. 30. It is no contradiction to *this*, that

He



He was *sent* for the purpose of redeeming apostate man. *Subordination of office* is perfectly consistent with *equality of nature*. An ambassador has the same *nature* with his sovereign, though inferior to him in *office*. But Christ's being *sent*, is expressive of, 1. *The authority with which He was invested to procure our redemption*. He glorified not Himself, to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, Heb v. 5. Him hath God the Father *sealed*, and given power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as he hath given him, John vi. 27. and xvii. 2. 2. *The unlimited confidence reposed in his ability and integrity for the great work given him to do*. Upon the credit of Christ's engagement, the Father, for four thousand years, received myriads of souls to glory *before* salvation was *actually* accomplished. Jesus is indeed a *faithful* High Priest, and we should not fear to commit our spiritual concerns into his hands, 2 Tim. i. 12. It expresses,

3. *His assumption of human nature*. "He appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh."—That is, he *really* assumed human nature. Forasmuch as His children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same; and that—not when it was possessed of its original glory and honour, Psa. viii. 5. but when *fallen* and become *sinful flesh*. But you will observe, that, though he *really* assumed human nature, He had *only* the *likeness* of its *sinfulness*. The brazen serpent which Moses erected by divine command, as a type of Christ, John iii. 14. had

had all the *appearance*, but none of the *poison*, of a real serpent. The incarnation of Christ was absolutely necessary to qualify Him for obeying the divine law as the righteousness of his people, and satisfying divine justice as their sin-atonement high priest. And hence the character in which he stood at the bar of his Father, was, that of

*A substitute "for sin."* He became surety for his people, Heb. vii. 22. *As such* the Lord laid on him the iniquity of them all, Isa. liii. 6. and he became responsible for them—was made a sacrifice for sin, and gave his life a ransom for many, Eph. v. 2. Matt. xx. 28. And the necessary effect of this substitution was,

Hereby God *condemned sin in the flesh*. That is, manifested in the most awful manner his most righteous indignation against sin, by the infliction of condign punishment upon it in the human nature of his Son, whom he *spared not*, while considered as the surety of guilty sinners. The revelation of the wrath of God against sin, in the destruction of rebelling Angels, the drowning of the old world, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, with all the miseries of this life, death itself, and the pains of hell for ever, is far inferior to what is made in the dreadful sufferings of Christ for sin. Well might He sweat (*thromboi aimatos*) *clots of blood*, Luke xxii. 44. at the melancholy prospect before him in Gethsemane's garden.—By his sufferings an honourable channel is opened for the flowing of infinite mercy to the trembling penitent. God now can be just, and the justifier of all who truly believe on his dear Son ;

Son; his justice cannot require *two* payments for *one* debt; and therefore, *because* He is faithful and just, He will forgive *us* our sins who *believe*, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, Isa. xlv. 21. Rom. iv. 5. 1 John i. 19. Blessed be God for such a *sure foundation* on which to build our hopes of mercy and eternal salvation! I would here,

1. Drop a tear of pity over those miserable souls who are under the condemnatory sentence of God's law; tied and bound with the chain of sin; ignorant of their danger, and consequently unconcerned about deliverance from it. O! Sirs, if God spared not his *own Son*, but delivered Him up to the unmitigated curse of the law, which He engaged to endure for his people—is it not preposterous, is it not mad, for you to expect that God will spare *you*, if you persist in your hostilities against Him?—While the death of Christ proclaims the greatest encouragement to *penitent sinners*—it thunders certain vengeance to *profane presumers*. May you, from a sensibility of your danger, fly to a certain remedy ere it is for ever too late!—I would, in the

2d place, Warn the *Pharisee* of his folly and danger. You who trust in yourselves as righteous, and are disposed to despise others; how do you reconcile the *necessity* of the Redeemer's life and death with your supposed ability of saving yourselves? Can you *prove* that the *Apostle* was *mistaken* in his assertion of the inability of the law to save? If *he* was not, *you* certainly are, and most fatally too! Your presumptuous confidence in your *own* performances



ances is more fatal to your immortal interests than open profligacy, for "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you," Mat. xxi. 31. You trust in the staff of a broken reed, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it. May God deliver you from your fatal error!

3. As God, in the riches of his mercy, hath sent his Son to do for sinners what the *law could not do* for them;—and as his Son hath completely accomplished that work, let penitent sinners take encouragement to apply to Christ for complete salvation. If you are truly sensible of your *need* of Christ, and *ardently desirous* of interest in Him, you then *come* to Him, and He assures you that *such shall in no wise* be cast out, John vi. 37. He is the Author of eternal salvation to all those weary and heavy-laden sinners, who obey his gracious invitation, and come to Him for rest, Heb. v. 9. Mat. xi. 28.

And may the believer, by the infinite mercies of his God, present his body and soul as a living sacrifice to his glory. For the purpose of exciting faith and love into lively and frequent exercise, contemplate the *authority* and *suitability* of your divine Redeemer to save, being *sent* of God, and *made sin* for you, that *you* may be made the righteousness of God *in Him*. Hence, *the most awful perfections* of the Deity are *no bar* to our eternal salvation! In the Sun of Righteousness, *all* the rays of divine attributes center and harmonize in the redemption of believing man. Glory be to God for Jesus Christ!

Ver. 4.

*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.*

THESE words express one of the merciful designs of God in sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. It was, *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in his people.* And to preclude the possibility of mistaking the persons who are actually interested in this privilege, the Apostle repeats, from the first verse, his description of them as *walking, not after the flesh, but after the spirit.* Let us inquire,

I. Into the *import* of this design of God in sending his own Son, viz. *that the righteousness of the law, &c.*

II. For *what reasons* the Apostle repeats his description of the persons interested in this privilege. *Such walk not after the flesh, but, &c.* This head will constitute our application of the subject.

I. The *import, &c.* By *the righteousness of the law*, we are to understand, the righteousness demanded by the law. The law demands a righteousness *absolutely perfect* in order to entitle to eternal life; and corresponding moral dispositions to *qualify* for the enjoyment of it. *Title* and *meetness* must unite to secure the enjoyment of eternal life. In allusion to *this* distinction, the law may be considered as fulfilled in the people

people of God, *two ways*. *First*, by placing to *their account* the spotless obedience of Christ, their Head and Substitute; with whom they are so united as to become *one*; and by virtue of which union, a mutual transfer commences of *their sins* to Christ, and of *Christ's righteousness* to them. For God hath made Him to be (by imputation) *sin for us, who knew no sin*; that we (in the same way) might be made the *righteousness of God in Him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. Thus believers possess a *valid title* to eternal life; and *this* sense of the text corresponds with the original preposition, which is frequently rendered *for*, as well as *in*. The words under consideration may consequently be read in this manner,—*God sent his own Son, &c. that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled FOR us who walk, &c.*

*Secondly*, The law may be considered as fulfilled in believers (at least in a degree), by the sanctifying agency of the divine Spirit. He *puts the law in their inward parts, and writes it in their hearts*, Jer. xxxi. 32. and produces gradual conformity to it, as the requisite *meetness* to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 12. So that as the people of God are *justified in the name of the Lord Jesus*, they are also *washed and sanctified by the Spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. vi. 11. And in both these respects the divine law may be considered as fulfilled in them; only with this difference, that their *title* to eternal life consisting in the *righteousness* of Christ Jesus, imputed to them, is *perfect and complete* the moment of their *actual* union to Him; whereas their *meetness* to enjoy it, is a *gradual work* of the eternal Spirit, but will be per-



fectcd in due time, so that the divine law shall be perfectly fulfilled *in* them as well as *for* them. Happy the people that are in such a case! — But, who are they? They are such *who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit*. This description we had in the *first* verse, and has been considered. It is natural to inquire,

II. For *what reasons* the Apostle *repeats* this description, &c.

I. To teach us the *importance* of this truth, that the only sure evidence of interest *in* Christ is conformity *to* Him in his moral image. These are inseparably connected. Christ *gave Himself* for his people, that he *might redeem* them from *all iniquity*, and purify them unto Himself as a *peculiar people zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. All confidence of interest in Christ, unsupported by the possession of the *necessary fruit* of that interest, is irrational and destructive. Yet, alas! how much of this confidence everywhere exists! Dreams, visions, voices, vain fancies, and airy flights, shall be preferred to those *gracious operations* of the divine Spirit, by which *alone* infallible witness can be borne with our spirits that we are the children of God, ver. 16. With many, these operations are *enthusiastic*; with others, what they *elegantly* call, *legal stuff*. — May God pity and pardon these sinners against their own souls, and help them properly to consider ver. 9. and Heb. xii. 14.

A *second* reason for the Apostle's repetition of the character of true believers probably was, his zeal to defend the doctrine of salvation by faith in the atonement and righteousness of Christ, from the slanderous reproaches of those  
who

who considered this doctrine inimical to the interests of true holiness and morality. On the contrary, he every-where maintains that the faith of God's elect consists in a *practical* acknowledgment of the truth which is according to *godliness*—that to all to whom Christ is *righteousness*, he is also *sanctification*—and that the undeniable fruit of *true* faith is holiness of heart and life. He admits none into the number of *true* believers, but such whose course and conversation is becoming the gospel. Acceptable obedience is the *necessary fruit* of true faith. It is an operative principle, purifying the heart, and working by love. The believer is divinely taught and empowered, *first*, to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and *then* to walk in Him, Col. ii. 6. It would be just as reasonable to expect that a branch separated from a tree could bear fruit of itself, as to expect that a soul separated from Christ could perform obedience acceptable to God, John xv. 4. By inculcating therefore the necessity of divine faith in Christ, we imitate the conduct of a prudent gardener, who *ingrafts* his branch in a proper stock, or *plants* his root in a fruitful soil.

An *additional reason* might be, the encouragement of the real Christian to expect the *perfect* sanctification of his nature at last, seeing *this* was an *express* design of the life and death of our blessed Lord. His gracious designs *cannot* be frustrated. He loved the church, and *gave Himself* for it, that *he might* sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, and present it to Himself a *glorious* church, having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing,

Ephes. v. 25, 26. You, therefore, in whom *a good work* is begun, may be *assured* of its continuance and progress. Remaining depravity is the source of your greatest sorrow. Blessed be God that it is so; for this proves the possession of a principle of divine grace. Fear not. The elder *shall* serve the younger. The Lord thy God shall cast out the Canaanites *by little and little*. The righteous *shall* hold on his way, and wax stronger and stronger, till he arrives at his appointed measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and *then* shall he be called to join the spirits of the just, now perfect in heaven, in eternal anthems of praise to Him who redeemed them by his blood, and made them kings and priests unto God and the Lamb. May this prove our happy portion! Amen.

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## Ver. 5.

*For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

THE Apostle having, in the *preceding* verse, repeated his description of the persons interested in gospel prerogatives, *thence* takes occasion to pursue the *important distinction* subsisting between such, and others. And, that no obscurity might attend his meaning respecting *walking after the flesh and walking after the Spirit*, he explains, in our text, *such* walking to consist in a *prevalent minding* of the different objects of flesh and Spirit. *For they that are af-*  
*ter*



*ter the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

In these words we may observe,

I. The existence of *two very different sorts* of persons in the world pointed out. *Some are after the flesh; others, after the Spirit.*

II. That these *different characters* pursue very *different objects*; one MINDING the THINGS of the FLESH, the other, the THINGS of the SPIRIT.

From a proper consideration of these interesting subjects, it will be easy to infer from men's *predominant principles*, and *preferred objects*, their *true character* and *real state* with regard to futurity. *By their fruits ye shall know them.*

I. The existence of *two very different sorts of persons*, &c. Human distinctions of men professing religion, subsist in an almost endless variety. But, in *divine estimation*, *two sorts* of men, and *only two*, exist. These are, such as are *after the flesh*, and such as are *after the Spirit*. These (as a pious writer observes) differ in their *originals*, *principles*, *assisting powers*, *states*, and *final portion in eternity*. They differ,

In their *originals*. The one is born after the *flesh*, the other is born after the *Spirit*, Gal. iv. 29. That which is born after the flesh is *flesh*; that which is born after the Spirit is *Spirit*, John iii. 6. The obvious import of these scriptures is, that while *some* continue under the power of *corrupt nature*; *others*, by regenerating grace, are happily *delivered*, and *renewed in the spirit of their minds*. “*We are of*

GOD," says an inspired writer in behalf of himself, and all who, as our text speaks, are after the Spirit; "and the whole world lieth in wickedness," or in the *wicked one*, Satan, as their root and head, 1 John v. 19. By virtue of the believer's *oneness* with Christ, see Heb. ii. 11. and *conformity* to Him, v. 29. he is authorised to use the language of his Lord to the besotted captives of sin and Satan, and say, *Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world,*" John viii. 23. "*Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do,*" John viii. 44. *We*, being *begotten again* unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Pet. i. 3. have GOD for *our Father*; so that we are the *sons* and *daughters* of the LORD ALMIGHTY. 2 Cor. vi. 18. These different originals produce,

2. Different *principles*. I cannot, at present, better define what I mean by a *principle*, than by calling it the *prevalent disposition* of the mind, producing a course of action, *corresponding* to the *nature* of that disposition. *Flesh* and *spirit* are the terms commonly adopted by the divine Spirit, to express men's different principles. These are *contrary* the one to the other, Gal. v. 17.; *contrary* of course must be their *effects*. The principles of one of these parties are *earthly, sensual, devilish*, James iii. 15. Those of the other are *heavenly*, Phil. iii. 20. *spiritual*, 1 Cor. ii. 15. *divine*, 2 Pet. i. 4. And this difference of principles originates from men's relation to different *representative heads*; to whom, by either a *first* or a *second* birth, they bear

bear a moral resemblance. The *first* of these heads is of *the earth, earthy*; the *second*, is the LORD from heaven: as is the earthy, such are they that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly, 1 Cor. xv. 47, 48.—They are further distinguished by,

3. Their *opposite assisting powers*. The real Christian's principles are aided and excited into proper operation by the influences of divine grace; God's church is his husbandry, 1 Cor. iii. 9. which he waters and preserves, *night and day*, Isa. xxvii. 3. The divine Spirit, in his sanctifying influence, descends as the rain upon the mown grass, as the showers that water the earth. He works to *will* and to *do* the divine good pleasure; and *strengthens* his people with might in the inner man unto all long-suffering with joyfulness. The *grace of Christ* is found *sufficient* for them; and through His strength they can do all things.—The principles of *degenerate nature* are assisted by influence from *hell*. The prince of the power of the air worketh with *energy* in the children of disobedience, Ephes. ii. 2. Those who have not the fear of God before their eyes, are, at the instigation of the devil, exposed to the perpetration of the most horrid crimes. He who *put into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray CHRIST*, John xiii. 2. and *filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the HOLY GHOST*, Acts v. 3. furnishes every rebellious sinner with infernal aid to maintain his opposition against God and godliness—to break their bonds asunder, and to cast away their cords. Happy they who are delivered from his power, and are



translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son! Acts xxvi. 18. Col. i. 13. Equally different are,

4. Their spiritual *states* before God in reference to the covenant of *works*, and of *grace*. *Natural men* are under the former, and are *debtors* to perform all it requires for their salvation, Gal. v. 3. Being under the law, they are consequently under *guilt*; for *we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are UNDER the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all in this state be found GUILTY before God*, Rom. iii. 19. Such are also under the *power* of sin, for sin hath dominion over those who are under the law, Rom. vi. 14.—The people of God are *not* under the law, but under *grace*; in consequence of which, their *guilt* is removed by the *blood* of Christ; and by the grace of the eternal Spirit the *power* of sin is subdued, nor shall it ever regain its former dominion over them.

*Lastly*, These different characters will eternally differ with regard to their final portions in eternity. Be not deceived, GOD is not mocked; for, *whatsoever a man soweth, THAT SHALL he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting*, Gal. vi. 7, 8. Contrary roads necessarily lead to contrary places. For the people of God,—*a rest remaineth*, Heb. iv. 9. *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. i. 4. into the possession of which, the Lord, the righteous Judge, will shortly receive them.—But for the ungodly!—*Tophet* is ordained

ed of old, Isa xxx. 33. *Hell from beneath is moved for them. to meet them at their coming,* Isa. xiv. 9. *There with Satan and his angels they shall for ever dwell; they shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous—into life eternal!* Mat. xxv. 46. O ye, to whom the truly religious are offensive eye-sores—whose piety, though very imperfect, excites your disgust, and awakens your prejudice—have patience but a *little* longer, and you will be rid of them for ever. They will not much longer molest your peace, or disturb your tranquillity. When you and they have passed the gate of *death*, then—FAREWELL FOR EVER AND EVER! A *gulf*, never to be passed, will separate you eternally from them, Luke xvi. 26.—We proceed to consider,

II. That these *different characters* pursue *very different objects*; one MINDING THE THINGS of the FLESH; the other THE THINGS of the SPIRIT. Here *objects* and *acts* claim our consideration; or, more plainly, we are to inquire *what is meant* by the THINGS OF THE FLESH and OF THE SPIRIT; and what it is to *mind* them.

I. By *things of the flesh*, we are to understand, either (1) such things as are *manifestly evil*, and agreeable to the *corrupt nature* of man; according to what we are taught, Gal. v. 19, &c. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, and are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, &c.* that is, criminal indulgences, and gross offences, of almost every kind. Or (2) such things relating to the flesh as are *innocent in themselves*, but become evils by *abuse* or *intemperance*. As when eating de-

generates into *gluttony*; drinking into *drunkenness*; clothing into *vanity* and pride, &c. *These* are the objects which engross the regard of our brutes in a human form, who deem one moment unamused a misery, and torture invention to find expedients for carnal delights. But,

“Say, wit’s oracles! gay dreamers of gay dreams!  
*How* will you weather an *eternal night*  
 Where such expedients fail?”

Death will shortly put a period to your swinish enjoyments, and what have you to succeed?

2. By the *things of the spirit*, we are to understand those things which the divine Spirit reveals and produces in *their* minds who are the happy subjects of his gracious operations, and to which He *powerfully inclines* them. (1) Such as he graciously *reveals*. Believers receive, not the spirit of the *world*, but the spirit which is of *God*, that they may *know* the things which are freely given to them of God, 1 Cor. ii. 11. This spirit, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, enlightens the eyes of the real Christian’s understanding, that he may know the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, Ephes. i. 18. He reveals the unsearchable riches of Christ treasured up in a covenant ordered in all things and sure; and makes wise unto salvation by a seasonable choice of Christ as the pearl of inestimable price. (2) Such as He *produces*. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth: Such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, &c. Ephes. v. 9. and Gal. v. 22. He adorns the hidden man of the heart with that which is not

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corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price, 1 Pet. iii. 4. so that the King's daughter is all glorious within, Psa. xlv. 13. To these divine objects the blessed Spirit (3) powerfully *inclines* his people, captivating their affections, exciting intense desires, causing them to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and induces them to esteem it their *meat* and *drink* to do the will of God.—Our

3d Inquiry is, The *import* of MINDING these different objects. The original term “is (says Mr. Leigh) a general word comprehending the actions and operations, both of the *understanding* and *will*: It is in the scripture applied to both, but *most commonly* to the actions of the *will* and *affections*, which are particular motions of the *will*.” It denotes, “to savour, to relish, or taste of.” There is, by analogy, a *mental* as well as a *corporeal* taste, for the *ear trieth words*, as the *mouth tasteth meat*, Job xxxiv.

3. The different objects of flesh and spirit are as suitable to *different dispositions*, as the most wholesome and delicious food is to animal appetite. *Fleshly minds*, Col. ii. 18. *savour* the things of the flesh. Such inherit the serpent's curse, and feed on the dust and husks of carnal enjoyments.—The *Christian*, partaking a divine *nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. possesses a divine *taste* for the *bread of life*, the *hidden manna*; and his sincere prayer is, “Lord, evermore give me *this bread*! He *savours the things of God*, Mat. xvi. 23.—*tastes* and *sees* that the Lord is good, Psa. xxxiv. 8.—and, by a gradual progress in a religious refinement of taste, is made  
more

more and more meet for the enjoyments of heaven.

Permit me now, with all the real concern of a sincere friend to your immortal interests, to intreat you impartially to examine to which of these classes *you* belong. I have been studiously plain on the subject, that you might *not* be at a loss to determine. The knowledge of your *prevailing bias* with regard to these different objects, is a *key* to your whole character. *That bias* is decisive of your *future fate*. If you differ from the people of God in character and conduct *here*, you will for ever differ from them in state and condition *hereafter*. Heaven and hell begin in this life. *Sin* as naturally tends to destruction, as a plummet to the centre. For he that soweth to the flesh, *shall* of the flesh reap *corruption*;—so *final ruin* is called. The grace of God in the heart of a real Christian, proves its *origin* from heaven, by its *tendency* thither, and will at last bring its possessor to the full enjoyment of it.

We may learn, from what has been observed, the *absolute necessity of regeneration*. For as a *taste* and *relish* for the things of the spirit can arise *only* from a *divine nature* imparted in regeneration, it is obvious that *without that nature* no *relish* or *taste* for it can be possessed. “Order,” in a qualified sense, “is heaven’s first law;” but to admit to heaven those who have no previous *taste* or *disposition* to enjoy it, would be a gross violation of order and of moral fitness, and therefore we may be sure it will *never* be done. Marvel not then at this—YE MUST BE  
BORN

BORN AGAIN, *for flesh and blood*, that is, *unrenewed nature*, cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

While others make their *belly their God*, and *mind earthly things*, Phil. iii. 19. let the real Christian prove the divinity of his *principles* by the purity and spirituality of his *affections* and *conduct*. *Habits* are known by the uniformity of *acts*. Thus may you prove yours to be *divine*. May you *so* behold the glory of the Lord, as to experience influence transforming you into his blessed image! Supplicate the influences of the divine Spirit for these purposes. So will your evidences for heaven be clear, your minds serene, your lives fruitful, and your deaths happy.

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Ver. 6.

*For to be carnally minded, is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.*

THE Apostle appears, from what has been considered, peculiarly careful to describe, with the utmost precision, the persons who are interested in the exalted privileges of the gospel. The most probable reasons for this proceeding seem to be—the prevention of presumptuous confidence in those, who are *not* interested in gospel privileges, *it being not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs*—that, by attending to proper evidences, the people of God may *know* that they are such, *enjoy* the consolation arising hence, and give the *glory* to God—and, next, to shew, in opposition to those who,



*as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things which they understand not, 2 Pet. ii. 12. that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, efficaciously teacheth to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world, Tit. ii. 11.*

In *this* conduct, the Apostle should be imitated by every minister of the divine word. It is required of such, accurately to *distinguish* and *separate between the precious and the vile*. This is to be *as God's mouth*, Jer. xv. 19. that is, his *word*, which clearly describes the different characters and future portions of men. In order to this, they should *study well* the human heart, and the *word of God*, and earnestly *pray* for a deep insight into both. *This* is the way to be *workmen which need not to be ashamed*. May every minister walk therein!

The Apostle having, in the *preceding* verse, described the different principles and practices of different men, shews, in *this*, the different *fruits* of both. *For, to be carnally minded, is DEATH; but to be spiritually minded, is LIFE and PEACE.*

May it please God to render profitable our meditations on these different productions of a carnal and of a spiritual mind! We are informed,

I. That *to be carnally minded is death*. I shall be readily excused from dwelling on the import of a carnal mind, when I inform you, that it is the *same* with being after *the flesh*, and **MINDING** *the things of the flesh*, which has been already considered. It is, in general, to have  
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the prevailing bias and delight of the mind turned to sensual, worldly, and sinful objects. It may be considered, with regard to *degree*, as being either *absolute* or *comparative*. In the *first* sense, it possesses the *unregenerate* sinner; he is *wholly* subject to it; *carnality*, in one form or in another, continually operating in him; seeing he is, what the Scripture calls him, *flesh*, Gen. vi. 3. with John iii. 6. In the *second* sense, it exists in *believers*, who compared with what they *ought* to be, are, alas! often carnal, and walk as men, 1 Cor. iii. 3. The contrary qualities of spiritual and of carnal mindedness exist in every true believer, and act in opposition to the nature of each other, so that he cannot do the things that he gladly would; but, through divine grace, the *former* of these is the *predominant* principle, and shall finally triumph over the *latter*. In the unbeliever, carnal-mindedness reigns unrivalled and unopposed, and fatal is its dominion; for,—*to be carnally minded is death*. This leads us to inquire

*In what respects to be carnally minded is death?*

—It is so with regard to its *nature* and *tendency*.

(1) Its *nature*, essentially consisting in a *death in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1. The carnally-minded are subjects of a *two-fold* death, distinguished by the term *legal* and *spiritual*. The first means a death *in law*; which is the state of a criminal condemned to die, whom the law, after the sentence is passed, *considers* as dead, because as a law it cannot save him from the execution of its sentence. In reference to the *divine* law, *thus* all unregenerate men are *dead*, being condemned to eternal death by the irreversible

verfible fentence of that law of which *fin is the tranfgreffion*, 1 John iii. 4. Such, *are* curfed, Gal. iii. 10.—*already* condemned, John iii. 18.—and, *as children of wrath*, are fufpended by the thread of life over the lake of *fire and brimftone*. Nor is it poffible for the *law* to deliver them from this fentence. This is the fole prerogative of the *gofpel*, to which the finner muft fly for refuge, or be for ever undone. By *fpiritual death*, we mean that deep-rooted, univerfal depravity and pollution of man's whole nature, whereby he is as deftitute of *right* knowledge of God, *true* love, and *acceptable* obedience to Him, as a corpf corrupting in the duft. Ignorance, Eph. iv. 18. enmity, ver. 7, 8.; and rebellion, Col. i. 21. conftitute the effence of this death. I beg you will do juftice to our representation, and obferve, that I do not fay that men dead in trefpaffes and fins have *no* knowledge of God, &c. but that they have *no right* knowledge, *true* love, &c. And fay I thefe things *as a man*, or faith not the *word of God* the fame alfo? Confult the fcriptures referred to, and then decide. In this miferable ftate, men have *no eyes to fee* either the glories of true religion, or the beauties of Him who is altogether lovely; *no ears* to hear the joyful found fo as to relifh and receive it; *no fenfation* either of their own mifery, or of God's mercy; *no motion* heavenwards; *no breath* of prayer or praife; nor any *hungring or thirfting* for the bread and waters of life. And what muft prove the final portion of fuch? What do you do with *your* dead, even thofe who were once moft dear to you?—You bury them as  
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masses of loathsome and putrefying matter for ever out of your sight. The dead in trespasses and sins are infinitely more loathsome and abominable to a holy God than the most filthy decaying carcase can be to us, and He will banish them from his presence for ever, and consign them over to *that death* to which

(2) A carnal mind naturally *tends*; namely, *eternal death*. In this it does finally terminate, *the wages of sin* being *death*. Every divine perfection secures this to those who remain dead in trespasses and sins. *Holiness* cannot but refuse all access of unrenewed sinners to God the fountain of happiness; *for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness?* 2 Cor. vi. 14. *Justice* dooms them to damnation, Mark xvi. 16. John v. 29. *Faithfulness* stands engaged to execute the dreadful sentence, Numb. xxiii. 19. and *Almighty Power* will be exerted to accomplish what holiness, justice, and faithfulness demand. O sinner! see the impossibility of escaping the wrath of God if you continue in your present state, and earnestly beg of Him in mercy to deliver you; so iniquity shall not prove your ruin.—Let us now consider the

IId Clause of our text, and that in the same order in which we considered the first. *To be spiritually minded is life and peace*. A spiritual mind supposes the existence of a spiritual *principle* produced in regeneration, and the *actual exercise* of that principle in the mind, producing light and life in its conceptions of spiritual things, and fixing the affections on them, as finding that relish and savour in them as prove highly

highly pleasing and satisfactory. Thus spiritual-mindedness is the great distinguishing character of true believers, and a source of

*Life and peace.* The import of these terms, and in what respects they constitute spiritual-mindedness, must be examined.

There is a *threefold* life mentioned in scripture as the happy possession of every true believer. (1) A life of *justification*, in opposition to that death in law which has already been considered. Every true believer, by virtue of his real union to Christ, *is passed from death unto life*, being fully and freely pardoned through his precious blood, and accepted to divine favour in that *righteousness which comes on all that believe to justification of life*, Rom. v. 18. This, however, is not the life intended in the text. There is (2) a life of *sanctification*; a life produced by the quickening spirit of Christ; and which stands opposed to a death in trespasses and sins. This life contains, of course, the direct contrast to the particulars included in that death. As spiritual death is constituted of ignorance, enmity, and rebellion; so spiritual life is constituted of knowledge, love, and humble and active subjection to the will of God. It is *eternal life, to know* the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John xvii. 3. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him, 1 John iv. 16. They are *dead* indeed unto *sin*, but *alive unto God* through Jesus Christ our Lord, and thus become servants to God, and have their fruit unto holiness, Rom. vi. 11. 22. Life, in the *first* of these senses, flows from the blood and righteousness

ousness of Christ; in the *last*, from the quickening energy of the divine Spirit. The one secures from hell, and *entitles* to heaven; the other prepares and makes *meet* to enjoy it. Life, in the latter signification, may be called spiritual-mindedness, as being the principal *effect* and *fruit* of it; it is also its most proper *evidence*. There is (3) a life of *consolation*. "Life (says Witfius) is not barely to live, but to be happy." And in this sense it is plain the Apostle uses the term in 1 Theff. iii. 8. *Now we LIVE, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* Now we *live*!—that is, *comfortably* and *joyfully*, according to what he adds in the following verse: "*For what thanks can we render to God—for all the JOY wherewith we JOY, &c.*" And this sense of the terms constitutes a material part of spiritual-mindedness. Never is the believer *so happy* as he is when most spiritual, and spiritually contemplating divine things.

We now inquire, concerning the nature of the peace mentioned here. There is (1) a *state* of peace, or of reconciliation with God, into which the believer is introduced by divine faith, Rom. v. i. This is not the peace intended in the text. But (2) a *peculiar fruit of the spirit*, preserving the mind in serenity and quietness even in the midst of afflictions, temptations, and distresses. This divine peace prevents discouragement or stumbling at the offences cast in the Christian's way to heaven, for *great peace have they who love God's law, and nothing shall offend them*, Psa. cxix. 165. It composes the mind under the frowns of the world, supports under every species of persecution, and constitutes an



anticipation of that eternal peace, into which at death the righteous shall enter, Isa. lvii. 2.

*How* this spiritual-mindedness is *life and peace*, remains to be considered. (1) A spiritual mind intent upon spiritual objects is a blessed *mean* of enjoying and preserving a sense of divine love, in which the life and peace of the mind consists. God's love to his people is in itself *unchangeable*; but a *sense* of it is not so. A carnal frame of mind deprives of this inestimable enjoyment. It is highly criminal in those who *have tasted* the inexpressible sweetness of that *loving kindness which is better than life*, to be indifferent with regard to the means of retaining a sense of it in the mind. Every exertion should therefore be used, by prayer and contemplation, to possess a spiritual frame of mind, as the only mean of enjoying *life and peace*. Again, (2) *this* frame of mind necessarily supposes abstraction of thought from numerous disquieting objects, the consideration of which has a tendency to depress and discourage the rising ardours of rational devotion towards a Being of consummate perfection. It is impossible to fix intensely the mind on different objects at the same time. A spiritual mind is one so divinely engaged with the glorious and animating objects of a blissful immortality, as to be destitute of *leisure* for attending to the sordid and discouraging things of time and sense. It (3) preserves the mind in a suitable pious frame for the acceptable and *cheerful* performance of every religious duty. Distraction of thought, despondency, and weariness in the performance of religious duties, are often felt and lamented by every real Christian. Spi-  
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ritual-mindedness banishes them all, and proves a fruitful source of life and peace in every branch of the service of a gracious God. O! how careful then should we be to possess this temper and disposition of mind! To conclude,

Is it so, that the carnally-minded are in a state of *spiritual*, and rapidly approaching to an *eternal* death?—Who then can or ought to forbear pitying their miserable condition, and ardently wishing their deliverance? Or, who can envy them any of their present enjoyments who will shortly be begging in vain for a drop of cold water to cool their tongues in hell? Were we to see persons in the richest array, enjoying every delicacy that the world can produce, and passing through the most charming and captivating walks and groves, to be—*broke upon the wheel*,—could we envy them their previous enjoyments? Surely no! And this is but a faint representation of the present pursuits and future portion of the carnally-minded. Again,

Is it so, that spiritual-mindedness is composed of life and peace?—Let this be an everlasting justification of the greatest spirituality of mind, and an ample apology for the Christian's most spiritual attachment to his spiritual concerns. Is it possible to exceed in our regard to what proves a fountain of life and peace to the soul? While the *carnal*, by mistaking the object at which they aim, *pierce themselves through with many sorrows*; the *spiritual*, divinely taught, walk in *wisdom's ways*, and find them *ways of pleasantness and paths of peace*. And what infinitely enhances the value of these ways, they not only afford *present* pleasure and peace, but terminate in the *future* possession

possession of consummate glory and bliss. Happy, happy the people that are in such ways! O Christian! ardently solicit of the Giver of every good and perfect gift more and more of that divine influence by which alone you can be more spiritual, and enriched with life and peace!

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## Ver. 7.

*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

IN these words the Apostle justifies the apparent severity of the sentence passed upon the carnal mind, by describing its peculiar malignity, being nothing less than *enmity against God*. Can it be a matter of astonishment that the carnally-minded are in a state of *spiritual* death, and doomed to an *eternal* one, when we consider that such are subjects of *enmity itself against God*?—But, how does the Apostle support his doctrine, that the *carnal mind is enmity against God*?—*Because*, saith he, *it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed* (according to the nature of enmity) *CAN BE*. Thus he *asserts* a most melancholy truth; and *proves* it by a cogent argument. The text in general teaches us, that a state of *nature* is a state of *enmity against God*; and that the enmity of the natural man is principally *pointed* against the *sovereignty and dominion* of God.—*Not subject to the LAW of God*. In considering more particularly this subject, I shall,

I. Shew, *why* the *carnal mind* is affirmed to be *enmity against God*.

II. *How*



II. *How this enmity appears in the unregenerate; and its remains in the regenerate.*

1. Shew *why* the carnal mind is termed *enmity*, &c. (1) Because it contains all that is *essential* to this horrid principle. It seems necessarily to comprise in its nature *two things*,—*aversion*, *opposition*. Aversion, implying a *turning away* with disgust from an object considered as loathsome or contemptible. In reference to God, the Scripture terms it a turning unto Him the *back* and not the *face*, Jer. xxxii. 33. denoting the contrariety of the unconverted sinner's nature to that of a holy God, whence proceeds an universal aversion from Him in thought, word, and deed. Its genuine language, however expressed, is, "*Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, Job xxi. 14. If we desired to know and walk in them, we would implore thy grace to teach and lead us, but we desire neither, and therefore we will not use the means of obtaining them."—How shocking is this! Enmity includes also—*opposition*. An implacable enemy will oppose, according to his ability, the object of his enmity. The sinner's opposition to God is expressed in Scripture by his *resisting the Holy Ghost*, Acts vii. 51. as the principal Agent by whom any proper intercourse can be had with God. Again, the carnal mind is called enmity, because (2) it contains *nothing but enmity*. This, we presume, will not be denied, if we consider aright the impossibility of any medium subsisting between love to God, and enmity against Him; and, that no love to God is *real* which is not *supreme*. Love not supreme, deserves not the name of love to God, as pos-

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nessing *no moral fitness* between the *act* and the *object*. And where there is *no* true love to God, there can be nothing but enmity against Him. And this is the true state and character of the carnally-minded. An additional reason for this title is (3) because it is *irreconcilable*. "It is not only an *enemy* (says Dr. Owen, for so possibly some reconciliation of it unto God might be made, but it is *enmity* itself, and so not capable of accepting *any* terms of peace. Enemies may be reconciled, but enmity cannot.—There is no way to deal with any enmity whatever, but by its abolition or destruction," Ephes. ii. 15. Regeneration changes *sinners* into *saints*; *unbelievers* into *believers*; *enemies* into *friends*; *rebels* into *willing subjects*, &c. but it neither *does*, nor *can*, change *unbelief* into *faith*; *impurity* into *holiness*; *enmity* into *friendship*; or *rebellion* into *subjection*. No—enmity retains its essential properties wherever it exists. We proceed to inquire,

## II. *How this enmity appears,*

1. In the *unregenerate*. And, in general, it appears by its *operations*; all its *actings* corresponding to its nature in *aversion* and *opposition*. Its *aversion* is described by—*Alienation from the life of God*, Eph. iv. 18. The life of God comprises union and communion with Him; and a consistent course of conduct and conversation flowing from these. As Christ is the source and centre of this life, so it is said to be hid, or treasured up, in Him, Col. iii. 3. And this is called *the life of God*, because it is the production of His *power*, and the object of His divine *approbation*. But man is naturally alienated from  
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this life. He neither knows nor relishes it. It is altogether contrary to his corrupt taste and disposition; and with disgust he turns from it; preferring the gratification of his senses, and of his corrupt passions and affections. The enmity of the carnal mind produces also

*Opposition to both the Being and Perfections of God.* (1) To his *Being*. *The fool hath said in his heart—no God*, Psa. xiv. 1. The original imports this to be the secret *wish* of his heart, that there were no God. This bitter root exists in every unconverted heart. When a guilty conscience checks the sinner in his sinful progress, and alarms him with the probable consequences of his conduct in another world, a secret wish is apt to arise, that there were no God to witness his present actions, and to judge him for them hereafter. “Were this the case,” thinks the sinner, “how happily might I live, and lay the reins on the neck of my inclination, and without the least restraint enjoy every species of what are called sinful pleasures! Oh! that there were no God; no *Elohim*, or moral Governor and Judge of men!” Now, can there be a stronger proof of the malignant nature, or a higher degree of enmity, than what arises to a wish of the annihilation or non-existence of its object? Horrid as this principle is, it is deeply rooted in every human heart, rendering men, according to the testimony of unerring truth, *haters of God*, Rom. i. 30. This enmity opposes

(2) The *Perfections* of God; particularly (1) *Holiness*. *It is not subject to the LAW of God.* Its opposition to the holiness of God, manifested in



his divine law, is obvious from the gross per-  
 versions made of its sacred meaning; the substi-  
 tution of self-invented superstitious rites and  
 ceremonies instead of discharging the important  
 duties which it enjoins; the denial of its un-  
 changeable moral obligation upon all, as an un-  
 erring rule of duty to God and man; and also  
 by attempting to lower its demands, in order to  
 correspond with the supposed ability of men to  
 perform it. To these proofs must be added, the  
 contempt, scorn, and persecuting rage, with which  
 the holiness of the people of God, though exceed-  
 ingly imperfect, is treated. Is not the conscien-  
 tious strictness of the lives of the faithful servants  
 of God offence sufficient to the ungodly herd to  
 scoff at, and oppose them? And can such  
 wretches love the *original* who hate the *copy*?  
 Love the *father* and hate the *children*? Impos-  
 sible! *Be not deceived, God is not to be mocked.*  
 Again, at (2) the *Justice* of God, is the oppo-  
 sition of the carnal heart directed. This awful  
 attribute gives it peculiar offence. No uncon-  
 verted man but would, as Mr. Boston observes,  
 "be content, with the blood of his body, to  
 blot that letter out of the name of God." This  
 being impossible, he excludes it as much as he  
 can from his thoughts, and endeavours to create  
 to himself an idol composed of *all mercy*, in  
 whom to hope for future happiness. Equally  
 offensive is (3) the *Faithfulness* of God, to the  
 carnal mind. By this perfection, God stands as  
 much engaged to execute his threatenings against  
 the ungodly, as he does to accomplish his pro-  
 mises made to his own people. This attribute  
 renders the final damnation of the *incorrigible*  
 sinner

sinner absolutely *inevitable*; and hence the sinner's deep-rooted enmity and opposition to it, having no other ground of a hope of future welfare but what is founded on a blasphemous supposition that God will prove a liar to his awful threatenings. But, *God is not a MAN, that he should LIE, nor the son of man that he should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it; or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?* Nor is the carnal mind possessed of less enmity against (4) the *Power* of God. Assured by his guilty conscience that the awful day *will come*, when this attribute will be employed against him for his endless ruin, the sinner wishes its destruction, or that he himself had power superior. Indeed, against *every* divine perfection, relation, office, and ordinance, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the enmity of the heart directly or indirectly pointed. It is universal with regard to every thing in and of its *object*—God. And it is universal also with regard to its *subject*—every faculty and power of the *soul*. And, without conversion, where can this horrible principle terminate but in—hell? We proceed to inquire,

2. *How the remains of enmity appear in the regenerate?* It is melancholy to consider that there *are* remains of enmity in such; but it is an infinite mercy that they are *but* remains. That there are remains of enmity in the truly regenerate, will not be denied, when we consider what it is which the Apostle calls enmity—the *carnal mind*. And can it be proved that God's people are freed from all remains of *carnality*? If not, it cannot be proved that

they are freed from all remains of *enmity*; for the terms are synonymous. Besides, as there is no medium between supreme love to God and enmity against Him, it must follow, that every motion of the heart and action of the life which interferes with, or opposes, supreme love to God, is an evidence of remaining enmity against Him. But who will affirm, that every thing in the believer's heart and life flows from supreme love to God? Alas! does not the contrary appear in—their *occasional love and commission of sin*? God and sin are eternal opposites. Love to the one, is enmity to the other. To the corrupt principle remaining in believers, sin is still agreeable; and when that principle operates and prevails, a degree of *love to sin* will be produced, and that love constitutes the very essence of enmity against God; and every *act* of sin is a blow struck by this accursed principle against Him. Remaining enmity appears also in—*undue love to the world*. The friendship of the world is *so* much enmity with God, that whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God, James iv. 4. The love of the Father and the love of the world are such opposites, that they cannot exist in a prevailing degree together. Undue love to the world necessarily involves in it a proportional degree of enmity to God, John ii 15. And where is the Christian that can plead *not guilty* to the charge of immoderate love to the world? Additional evidences of remaining enmity might be produced from the languor of the Christian's desires of holiness; his deficiency in brotherly love, forgiveness, &c. :  
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But our prescribed limits will not permit enlargement.

The doctrine we have delivered sufficiently accounts for *three* things. (1) *Why* there is *no peace to the wicked*, Isa. lvii. 21. How is it possible there should while he is in a state of accursed hostility against God himself? God cannot but in return oppose the daring rebel, and every creature has espoused his cause and declared against the sinner; so that, with his master, he may *seek rest*, Mat. xii. 43, in an endless diversity of objects, but *none* will he ever *find*. The curse of God follows him as the shadow his body, and blasts all his enjoyments. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in streights; a fire not blown shall consume him. The heavens shall reveal his iniquities, and the earth shall rise up in judgment against him. Lo, *this* is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God. O, sinner! cry to God for mercy, and grace to agree with Him your adversary quickly! Mat. v. 25. This doctrine accounts, (2) For the *sovereignty* and *freeness* of the grace of God, in man's salvation.—*Its sovereignty*. All are in a state of enmity and opposition against God, and He possesses an indisputably just right to save some and leave others, if he please. The exercise of a just right cannot be wrong; and indeed, however man may oppose, it must be obvious to every impartial inquirer after truth, that the salvation of such enemies to the living God, as all men naturally are, can originate in nothing but a sovereign decree of electing love.—*Its freeness*. For what merit

can open enemies to God possess to procure his favour? *It is of the Lord's mercies that they are not already consumed*; and if any of them should be eternally saved, it will be to the *praise of the glory of the free grace* of God alone. The doctrine of man's natural enmity to God, accounts (3) for the *necessity of regeneration*. Can the necessity of being made the sincere and consistent lovers of God be denied by any man of common sense, and the least reflection? If not, the necessity of regeneration must be admitted, for by it this change is effected. *Ye therefore must be born again.*

I would compassionately exhort you, my friends, impartially to examine yourselves on this very interesting subject, whether you are friends or enemies of God. It will be necessary to prove that you have *supreme* love to God, and are truly subject by cheerful obedience to his *law*, to make good your claim of being *true* lovers and friends of God, for the *reverse* of these constitute enmity against Him. I doubt not but some amongst you have reason to hope that the predominant power of your enmity is broke by the all-conquering grace of God, who reconciles enemies to Himself by the death of his Son; but is it not an affecting consideration, that you should have any remains of enmity against a God of infinite love to you? Oh! may this consideration deeply humble, and excite the exertion of every effort by prayer and meditation, especially on the cross of Christ, to be more and more freed from remaining enmity; and may we derive encouragement from the prospect

prospect of that happy state where all enmity shall be eternally excluded, and peace, joy, and perfect love, for ever and ever prevail!

Ver. 7.

*So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

THESE words constitute an inference naturally arising from the preceding observations of the Apostle concerning the carnal mind. He had, in particular, just described it as being *enmity itself against God*; whence he concludes, that they who are under its full power and dominion *cannot please Him*.

The text, you perceive, informs us, that certain persons, described as being *in the flesh*, are *incapable*, as such, of *pleasing God*. I shall attempt, I. To *explain* this *description*; II. *Prove* the *inability* of the persons described to *please God*.

I. The *description* of the persons mentioned in the text, is to be *explained*. They are said to be—in *the flesh*. These words sometimes mean no more than the soul's existence in the body, or to be alive; but this cannot be their signification in the text; for many, who in *this* sense are *in the flesh*, do that, which, through divine grace, is pleasing to God. But, to be *in the flesh*, according to the meaning of the text, is, to be under the power and dominion of carnal principles, and corrupt affections. It is, in general, to be in a state of nature, unconverted and unrenewed by the divine spirit of God.

There is an important difference between being *in the flesh*, and having flesh *in us*. Every



believer has remains of corrupt nature, called *flesh*, still *in him*, opposing the gracious principle and operations of which he is subject as a living member of Christ. But, this is very different from being *in the flesh*. This denotes *entire* subjection to the reign and dominion of depraved nature; which, blessed be God, is not the case with true believers. They are *in Christ*, ver. 1. *in the Spirit*, ver. 9. *in the faith*, 2 Cor. xiii. v. all importing the direct *opposite* of being in the flesh.—Of such who are in the flesh it is asserted,

II. That they *cannot please God*. The truth of this will be obvious to unprejudiced minds, if we properly consider, 1. The *requisites* for this purpose; and, 2. *Their deficiency* in those requisites who are yet *in the flesh*.

1. The requisites for performing what is pleasing to God, are—the *acceptance* of our *persons*;—and the *purity* of our *principles, ends, motives, and rule*. (1) Our *persons* must be previously accepted. The order universally observed in sacred scripture is, *first*, to regard the *person*; *then* the *performance*. If the former is not *approved*, the latter will not be *accepted*. Both Cain and Abel sacrificed; Esau and Jacob wept and made supplication; the Pharisee and Publican prayed; but we all know the different acceptance and success of their performances. And whence arose this difference, but from the different estimates formed of their *persons*? *Unto CAIN and to his OFFERING the Lord had not respect*, &c. Gen. iv. 5. First the *person*, you perceive, is *disapproved*, *then* the *performance*, agreeable to the order observed in Mal. i. 10. *I have*

*have no pleasure in YOU, saith the Lord of hosts; neither will I ACCEPT an OFFERING at YOUR hands.* The persons of sinners can be rendered acceptable to God, only by a real union to Christ, Eph. i. 6. Which union is illustrated by that of a *conjugal* nature. Previous to this union, all religious performances are as illegitimate as children born before marriage. See Rom. vii. 4. The next requisite for the acceptance of our performances is,

(2) The *purity* of their *principles, ends, motives, and rule.* (1) The *principle* whence they flow must be good. *This* is the grace of God, implanted in the heart; for without this, we cannot serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, Heb. xii. 28. *Believers are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto the performance of those good works in which God hath pre-ordained them to walk,* Eph. ii. 10. (2) The *end* must be pure: Not to gain human applause or commendation; much less to purchase security from hell and a title to heaven: But, to *glorify* God, Mat. v. 16. and manifest the genuine effects of his almighty grace as effectually teaching to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts. The honour of God and of true religion are the ends aimed at in acceptable obedience. Pure must be (3) The *motives* of it. These are—the supreme authority and infinite goodness of God. What is morally right or fit is to be performed, not *merely* on that account, but *because* it is *commanded*. Otherwise it is not an act of *obedience*; obedience including *knowledge* of the will of a supreme Ruler, and *intention* of performing it *as commanded*. To  
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the supreme authority must be added the infinite *goodness* of God, as an additional source of moral obligation. The divine goodness lays all rational beings under infinite obligations. And often in sacred scripture is this goodness urged as a powerful and an approved motive to zealous obedience (see Rom. xii. 1. 2 Cor. vii. 1. Eph. v. 2, &c.); and to be influenced by *this* motive is essential to acceptable obedience. *Lastly*, the *rule* must be right. *Socrates*, a heathen philosopher, could observe, "that God would accept of no worship or obedience but what he Himself had prescribed." In *vain* do they worship God who teach for doctrines *the commandments of men*. God hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what He requires of thee. His divine *law* is the immutable standard of moral obligation to Himself and man. If it did not require the performance of *every* duty due to God and man, it would be *deficient*; if it required *more*, it would be *redundant*: To assert either is impious. This divine law, God, in regeneration, puts in the minds of his people, denoting proper *knowledge* of it; and writes it in their hearts, intimating that sanctifying influence whereby they are enabled *acceptably*, though *imperfectly*, to obey it, Heb. viii. 10. These are the requisites for the acceptance of our performances. But now,

2. They who are *in the flesh* are deficient in *every one* of these requisites. Their *persons* are obnoxious to a holy God. They are under his most righteous curse, Gal. iii. 10. He is angry with them every day, Psa. vii. 11. Their very sacrifices are an abomination to Him, Prov. xv. 8.



Isa. i. 11. & lxvi. 3. The *principle* by which such are actuated, is mere *self love*, operating by slavish fear of hell, or mercenary hope of heaven. It is not because they *love* religion that they attend to it at all, but because they don't like to perish eternally for the *want* of it. Their obedience, such as it is, is that of a *slave*, for fear of the *rod*; or of a *hireling*, in hope of *wages*. Their *end* is not the glory of God, but the pacifying of their own consciences; the exclusion of guilty fears by Pharisaical hopes; and to be applauded by mortals for their supposed sanctity, while they are only *painted sepulchres* full of all abominable pollution *within*. Equally impure are their *motives*, and the *rule* by which they regulate their conduct; following their own vain and superstitious imaginations, and the light of conscience, ignorantly supposed to be sufficient. On all these accounts, we hope that the truth of the text now appears obvious, that *they who are in the flesh cannot please God*.

From the preceding observations, who can forbear lamenting the miserable state of unconverted man? He is under the displeasure of Almighty God, and totally devoid of all ability to remove that displeasure. In that miserable state he is, alas! heaping up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Rom. ii. 5. O! that those of you who are yet *in the flesh*, may be seasonably convinced of your dangerous condition, and ardently cry to God for deliverance!

Hence also we are taught the impossibility of salvation by *works*. Works!—how is it possible  
for

for the unconverted sinner to be saved by good works, who never performed one, in God's estimation, in his life?—Forget not the text.—They that are in the flesh *cannot please God*; and surely God will not justify and save you for *displeasing* Him. Be assured, that it is *not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, nor by works of righteousness* that any man can do, but according to the *mercy of God*, that any sinner is or can be saved, through the blood of Christ and the washing of regeneration, Rom. ix. 16. Tit. iii. 5. Seek salvation this way, for this way alone it can be found.

May real believers study and endeavour to please their heavenly Father in all things! This is the end of your effectual calling, 2 Tim. ii. 4. You are a royal priesthood, and should offer up acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 9. Offer therefore the sacrifices of praise to God continually, giving thanks to his name, doing good and communicating, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased, Heb. xiii. 15, 16. I conclude, sincerely desiring, with the Apostle, Col. i. 9, 10. that God may fill you with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Amen.

Ver. 9.

*But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

THE Apostle, conscious how prone the people of God are, from a sensibility of their sinful infirmities, to draw the most unfavourable conclusions against themselves; appears, in the words of our text, concerned to prevent those conclusions. He knew well how much they dreaded to be in the flesh, disapproved by God; and their frequent fears, from the remains of the *flesh in them*, that *they* were yet *in the flesh*; and therefore he kindly assures them that this was *not* their case; and proves what he asserts from their possession of the divine Spirit; the possession of whom he maintains to be *so* essential to one related to and interested in Christ, that, *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His*.

Thus you perceive that the text is composed of—a positive assertion—a substantial proof—and information concerning the extent and validity of that proof, as containing a rule from which there is *no* exception. Let us consider,

I. The Apostle's *assertion*. *But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit*. As if he should say, “What I have affirmed concerning the *atrociousness* of a *carnal* mind as being *enmity* against God; the certain doom appointed for this *enmity*, and the inability of its subjects to do any thing  
pleasing



pleasing to God;—my observations on these topics—affect not you. Of *you*, beloved! I am persuaded better things, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak; for *ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit*; and, consequently, you are happily secure from the bitter fruits of the former, and interested in all the benefits of the latter.”

To be *in the Spirit*, is the direct opposite of being in the flesh. Recollect the particulars descriptive of the latter, and you will easily understand what is imported by the former. Flesh and Spirit, considered as *principles*, are in every believer, Gal. v. 17.; but consider the terms *in the flesh*, or *in the Spirit*, to be expressive of man's spiritual *state* before God, and it is obvious that no man can be in *both* these at the *same* time. Now believers, notwithstanding the remains of the *flesh* are *in them*, *they* are not *in the flesh*, but happily introduced into a state of reconciliation with God, and of growing conformity to his moral image. But, the Apostle renders the meaning of being *in the Spirit* sufficiently intelligible in,

II. The substantial *proof* which he produces of the truth of his assertion, that the believing Romans *were not in the flesh, but in the Spirit*; and that is, because the divine Spirit dwelt *in them*. The Apostle's mode of expression is indeed, according to our translation, *hypothetical*; *if so be*, &c. but as these terms import a degree of uncertainty, inconsistent with the Apostle's *discernment of Spirits*, 1 Cor. xii. 10. and his observation of those fruits of the converted Romans' faith by which its reality and genuine nature were

were known and spoken of throughout the whole world, as he testifies, chap. i. ver. 7; so it seems most proper, with a judicious paraphrast\*, to render the original term (*eiper*) *because*; then the Apostle's proof will appear to advantage, thus:—*Ye are not, &c. but in the Spirit, BECAUSE the Spirit of God dwells in you. Dwells in you as a governing Agent, working efficaciously the good pleasure of his will.*

Thus we are taught, that it is the peculiar prerogative of the true believer to be possessed of the divine Spirit—not as a *visitant*, for a short period; but as a *resident* for ever. In his *ordinary* operations, and *extraordinary gifts*, He has visited many whom He has afterwards left for ever, as *Saul*, and others; see 1 Sam. xvi. 14. Mat. vii. 22. Heb. vi. 4—6 But in his *sanctifying* operations, He takes up his *residence* in the believer as His *house* and *temple*, where He *dwells*, and will dwell *for ever*, John xiv. 16. operating as a well of living water *springing up unto everlasting life*, John iv. 14.

Although this doctrine has been universally adopted by Protestant churches of every denomination; I am not ignorant of the opposition made to it, even by many who profess to belong to such churches.

Mere *natural* men, destitute of the Spirit of God, and to whom the things of God are, consequently, *foolishness*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. consider pretensions to the possession of the divine Spirit as the very essence of *enthusiasm*, or the height of *presumption*; and this too often in opposition to their own frequent pretended requests *that God*

\* Dr. Guise.

would

*would not take his holy Spirit from them?*—Who is not shocked and grieved at such impious inconsistency as this? But whatever objection may be made to this doctrine, the point is *already* determined; and such and so great is the necessity of having the divine Spirit, that,

III. The Apostle lays it down as a rule from which there is no exception, *that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* I shall attempt to prove, that all real Christians possess the Spirit of Christ; and that the possession of this Spirit is so essential to the character of one belonging to Christ, that if any one have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. But, first, permit me to request your attention to the title here given the divine Spirit. The same Spirit which was before called the Spirit of God, is here called the Spirit of Christ; and for what other reason but because these terms are synonymous? This mode of expression at once proves the *divinity* of Christ, and the peculiar *authority* by which the Spirit acts: And “hence (says Dr. Owen) is the sin against the Holy Ghost unpardonable; and hath that adjunct of rebellion put upon it that no other sin hath; namely, because he comes not, he acts not, in his own name only, though in his own also, but in the name and authority of the Father and Son, from and by whom he is sent; and therefore to sin against Him, is to sin against all the authority of God, all the love of the Trinity, and the utmost condescension of each Person to the work of our salvation.” May we be divinely established in the doctrine of the divinity of our Redeemer, as of infinite moment to the efficacy of his blood and righteousness;



ousness; and regard with awful reverence the authority of the office and operation of the *eternal Spirit!*

I now proceed to prove that real believers possess the divine Spirit; and shall prosecute this design by shewing that such possession is—*possible,—probable,—certain.* (1) 'Tis *possible*. None, surely, who acknowledge the infinite power and goodness of God will deny this. The doctrine for which we plead implies no contradiction to either right reason, or revelation. If it did, it could not be true. But, on the contrary, both teach us to reason, analogically, *thus*:—As He who planted the *ear*, cannot but *hear*; and who formed the *eye*, must necessarily *see*, Psa. xciv. 9. so He who hath imparted rational souls to men, whereby they maintain intercourse among themselves, and mutually transmit their thoughts; doubtless can, if he pleases, impart His spirit to the souls of men, for the purposes of communion and fellowship with Himself. Hence it must appear (2) *probable* that he actually *does so*. Men in all ages, and every denomination, have thought He did. Surely they must have had *some* foundation for thinking so. Admitting that no regard were due to the testimony of some who have professed to be influenced by the divine Spirit; the testimony of others hath been too respectable to be denied. And when we consider the general depravity of human nature; the peculiar sanctity of some who were once notorious perpetrators of every enormity; together with the religious triumphing of others in deaths the most dreadful and alarming to human nature; methinks it appears to be no more than a sober dictate

dictate of reason to admit the probability of such being actuated by a Spirit superior to their own; — by one truly divine; as appeared by the divinity of its effects. We advance a step higher, and venture to affirm, that,

(3) It is *certain* that all true believers have the Spirit of God. In confirmation of this truth, allow me (1) to form an appeal to your *profession* and *candour*. You surely will not deny but that amongst the myriads of Adam's apostate race, some, doubtless, in a peculiar sense, belong to Christ, as His redeemed and converted property. Grant this, and be consistent with your professed belief of the Bible as the word of God, and you cannot deny but that some do truly possess the Spirit of Christ; for my text assures us, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he belongs not to Him. Consider (2) How often God has promised to impart his Spirit to his people. *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes*, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will pour, &c. the Spirit of grace and supplication*, Zech xii 10. Christ spake of the Spirit under the metaphor of *living water*, which they who believe on Him should receive, John vii. 38, 39. He engaged to send to his people *another Comforter to abide with them for ever*, John xiv. 16. This is a *small* specimen of the promises made of the divine Spirit, and certainly God did not make these promises in vain; and if He did not, His people shall certainly enjoy the Spirit promised. To these proofs must be added (3) The *necessity* of the bestowment of the divine Spirit upon them. No blessing purposed by the Father, and promised by the Son, but what

what is revealed and conveyed by the Holy Spirit.

According to the divine *plan* of salvation, the following particulars are absolutely necessary :—*Union to Christ*, for those without Christ are without hope, Ephes. ii. 12. Col. i. 27.—*divine faith*, for he that believeth not shall be damned, Mark xvi. 16.—*true holiness*, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14.—*spiritual strength*, for the real Christian must deny himself, take up his cross, and endure hardness as a good soldier;—*divine consolation*, to counterbalance the afflictions of life, and to support under them. Now, who but the eternal Spirit is the immediate Author and Bestower of these blessings? Thus he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17. True faith is of the operation of God the Holy Ghost, Col. ii. 12. 1 Cor. xii. 9. for which cause He is called the Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13. He is the sole Author of true holiness, 2 Thess. ii. 13. Spiritual strength is of his production, Eph. iii. 16. and also all true consolation, Acts ix. 31. From these considerations, we hope, it evidently appears to be a truth, that real believers do indeed possess the Spirit of God.

From the preceding observations does not the impossibility of belonging to Christ without possessing His Spirit appear undeniable? Be assured of it, the possession of that divine Spirit alone can constitute us Christians. Without that, we are only baptized infidels. *Names* alter not the *nature* of things. Call a *fool*, Solomon; will that make him wise? or a *weak* man, Sampson; will that make him *strong*? Just as much as the calling profane



profane characters Christians will prove them to be such. A *human* spirit is not more necessary to constitute a *man*, than the *divine* spirit is to constitute a *Christian*. If so,

How awful is your state, who are destitute of the Spirit? Is it possible for you, in opposition to the evidence produced from the word of God, to assure yourselves that the doctrine which we have advanced is false? If not, your state is alarming. *Not* to belong to *Christ*, is to belong to the *Devil*. The former disowns you, and there is none but the latter to receive you. Your present immersion in the cares, pleasures, and pursuits of life, allows you no leisure to contemplate your danger, and to endeavour to avoid it; but you will be awfully convinced of it at last, and find, in being disowned by Christ at death and judgment, your misery to be incomparable. O! Sirs, the interesting importance of the subject justly entitles it to your serious regard. Beware of opposing this doctrine, lest you *so* sin against the Holy Ghost as ——— !

Blessed, truly blessed, are ye who possess this best of gifts! Ye *do* belong to Christ. And, as His dear-bought property, you are inestimably precious to Him. As a proof of this, He has bestowed upon you a blessing far superior to earthly crowns and treasures. Nor should you indulge excessive scrupulosity concerning your possession of his divine Spirit. If you are convinced that you are guilty, helpless, and hopeless sinners, without Christ; if your *whole* dependence for salvation is upon the mercy and grace of God, through the blood and righteousness of his dear Son; if sin is become abominable,

minable, and holiness desirable, in your estimation; if you are spoilt for the trifles of this life, and begin to relish the enjoyments of that which is to come; if your consciences bear you witness that all this is your *real*, though *imperfect* experience;—away with your doubts and fears concerning your belonging to Christ and possessing his Spirit.—These convictions, views, sensations, and desires, are all fruits of the divine Spirit. These are spiritually *good things towards the Lord God of Israel*, but you know that *naturally* no good thing dwells in us. Give the glory due to the divine Spirit, and be concerned to enjoy the consolation arising from the exalted prerogative of which we have been treating. Beware of quenching the Spirit, either as a Sanctifier, by indulging sin; or as a Comforter, by idolizing any earthly enjoyment; and make daily use of the encouragement given by our Lord, Mat. vii. 11.

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Ver. 10.

*And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

THE Apostle, ever attentive to the spiritual interests of the people of God, and studious to promote their edification and comfort, seems in these words to anticipate an objection which he perceived might probably be made to the doctrine which he had delivered, concerning the complete security of real believers from every penal evil, by the precious blood and obedience of their adorable Redeemer. “If it be  
“ so

“ so (it might be replied), that believers are  
 “ thus secured, what account can be given for  
 “ their subjection to death equally with others?”  
 To this the Apostle replies, by way of concession,  
 that it is indeed true that believers must die as  
 well as the rest of men; but he denies death to  
 be a *penal* evil to such, and affirms that it is  
 neither *total*, the *body* only being dead, while  
 the *soul* possesses a life divine and immortal; nor  
*perpetual*, for *He who raised up Christ from the*  
*dead, would also in the resurrection quicken their*  
*mortal bodies*, and raise them up to eternal life at  
 last, v. 11.

This happy exemption is affirmed to have  
 been the privilege of the believing Romans, on  
 the supposition of *Christ being in them*. “ The  
 sum is (say the continuators of the learned Mr.  
 Poole), if you be Christians indeed, though your  
*bodies* die, yet your *souls* shall live, and that for  
 ever; and your dead *bodies* shall not finally pe-  
 rish, but shall certainly be raised again; so it  
 follows in the next verse.” The whole of the  
 limited immunity mentioned in the text, is, you  
 perceive, suspended upon Christ’s being in those  
 by whom it is possessed. Let us therefore con-  
 sider,

I. The *import* of Christ’s internal residence in  
 his people. *If Christ be in you*, &c. not that the  
 Apostle doubted His dwelling in many of the  
 Romans; but he meant to shew the genuine  
 fruit of this, and that every privilege possessed  
 by believers, resulted solely from a real union to  
 Christ their heavenly head. In the preceding  
 verse he had spoken of the *Spirit’s* residence in  
 believers; here of *Christ’s*. What he affirms of  
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the one, is equally true of the other; for Christ dwells by his Spirit in the hearts of his people. To express the unity of design and operation of the eternal Three, in the divine Essence, they are all represented as residing in believers. This our Lord teaches, John xiv. 23. *If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my FATHER will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make OUR ABODE with him.* Here Father and Son are mentioned as making their abode in believers, and we have before proved that so also does the divine Spirit; for *if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.*

Union to Christ produces a mutual in-being, between him and his people; and is the source of actual interest in, and begun enjoyment of, the precious fruits of his life and death. It is therefore of infinite importance to enjoy this union. Its certain fruits—by which I earnestly intreat you to examine yourselves, are—spiritual life, likeness, and strength. (1) *Spiritual life.* The Apostle speaks as the mouth of every Christian when he affirms, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,” Gal. ii. 20. This assertion harmonizes with that of St. John, John v. 12. “He that hath the Son, hath life.” Spiritual life includes *divine knowledge* of God and truth as manifested in Christ Jesus; *holy choice* of the favour and image of God, as the true happiness and beauty of the soul; *pious affections*, thirsting after God as the fountain of living waters; and a life and conversation becoming the sacred obligations of the Gospel. Christ is come, that his people

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might

might have this life, and an increase of it even to an abundance, John x. 10. (2) *Likeness*, or conformity to the moral image of Christ. *As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.* Those in whom Christ is, and who are in Him, are *new creatures*, from whom the *old things* of sin have *passed away*; and the things of true religion become new and delightful, 2 Cor. v. 17. The mind will generally receive a tincture, corresponding with the nature of the objects with which it is most conversant. Attention to vain and frivolous objects, produces a vanity and frivolosity of taste and disposition, &c. Believers, by beholding, though as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are gradually changed into the same image, from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. (3) *Strength* to do and to suffer the will of God. Christ strengthens *their* hearts in whom he resides, with all might according to his glorious power; and through His strength, His people can do all things. "Ye are of God," (says St. John to true believers,) "and have overcome them," (viz. the "old dragon with his infernal crew,)" "because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4. Such can deny themselves, take up cheerfully, and bear patiently their cross for Christ's sake; and deem it their highest honour to glorify his name. Thus I have pointed out some of the certain consequences of union to Jesus; and the final result of the whole is, eternal life. "Because I live," says One who can and will make his words good, "ye *shall* live also," John xiv. 19. Christ formed *in* his people,

people, Gal. iv. 19. is a *sure* foundation of the *hope of glory*, Col. i. 27. But notwithstanding this indissoluble union to Christ, the Apostle,

II. Grants that *believers* must *die* as well as others. *The body is dead because of sin.* In this concession, we may observe—the *force* of the term, used by the Apostle on this subject, and—the *reason assigned* for what that term imports. With regard (1) to the *force* of the term used, you observe, he does not say, that the body is *mortal*, and must *die*; but—the body is *dead*. And why does he say so?—Because an irreversable sentence of death is passed upon it. *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* It is unalterably appointed unto all men once to die. None have power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is *no discharge in that war.* God, indeed, to shew his sovereign power, and to afford the spirits of the just a specimen of the glory to which He will at last raise their bodies, dispensed with this established law, in the cases of Enoch and Elijah, and swallowed up mortality in life, by an instantaneous metamorphose of both body and soul to complete glory and blessedness. But now, no exemption from death is to be expected. Believers themselves must

“Join the dull mass, increase the trodden soil,  
And sleep till earth herself shall be no more.”

The propriety of the Apostle's term appears from this additional consideration, that sentence is not only passed, but in part already *executed*



on the body: What else mean those frequent lingering or acute pains to which the human frame is subject? The seeds of death are already sown, and

“The young disease, which must subdue at length,  
Grows with our growth, and strengthens with our  
strength.”

Man's days are determined, the number of his months are with God, who hath appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. Already has death brandished his dart before you, and given “sure earnest of his final blow.” O that a sense of our mortality may induce us to pass the time of our sojourning in becoming fear—repress pride—moderate our regard for present objects, and so to number our days as to apply our hearts to wisdom. If we require the reason why the body is thus dead, the Apostle will inform us that it is,

(2) *Because of sin.* Sin it was which introduced death into the world, and all our woe. It is the fruitful source of every misery which mortals either suffer or dread. True it is, that the precious blood of Jesus, eternal praise to his blessed name! has secured every believer from the *sting* of death, but not from its *stroke*. All that was *penal* in death, Christ hath effectually removed. He hath transformed the king of terrors into a messenger of peace. “The graves of all his saints he blest, and soften'd every bed.” He will accompany them through the valley of the shadow of death, and receive their weary souls to that eternal rest which remains for the people of God. But I agree in  
sentiment

sentiment with those who consider the term—*because of sin*, to express what is denominated a *final cause*, and regard the death of the body as an appointed mean to accomplish the total destruction of the remains of sin.—A peculiar species of *leprosy*, capable of infecting the very walls of the Israelitish houses, Lev. xiv. 33. sometimes did so to such a degree, as to render the demolition of the whole house necessary.—Such a leprosy is *sin*, and equally necessary is it to lay the earthly house, which it hath universally infected, *low, even to the dust*. Thus viewed, death ought to be considered by the real christian as a *friend*, who terminates for ever the warfare against sin, and introduces the believing soul into eternal blessedness. Thus, *partial* appears to be the dominion of death, affecting only the *bodies* of believers, for, as the Apostle observes,

III. *The spirit is life because of righteousness.* The spirit, or soul, may be said to be life, because—it is appointed and entitled to eternal life,—and also because in part this life is already enjoyed; for our blessed Lord gives unto His people “eternal life, and they shall never perish. It is eternal life to know the only true God,” and He gives his people “an heart to know him,” Jer. xxiv. 7. Though the *body* then is dead in the sense described, the *soul* possesses a life which it cannot lose—not mere *immortality*. This is possessed even by those who shall eternally die the second death: But a life consisting in the peculiar favour of God, and the begun enjoyment of the blessed fruit of that favour.

Every true believer enjoys this life—*because of righteousness. Righteousness delivers from death*, saith Solomon, Pro. x. 2. But what righteousness? What other righteousness can confer a *title* to eternal life, and grace previously to *prepare* for the enjoyment of it, but that of our incarnate God? He is the *Lord, the righteousness of his people*, in whom with Paul, they all desire to be found, Phil. iii. 8. Those invested with this robe, this *wedding garment*, are now heirs, and shall shortly be complete possessors of eternal life.

My dear friends, as every spiritual blessing is treasured up in Christ, Ephes. i. 3. and flows to sinners by virtue of union to him, *we* cannot inculcate, nor can *you* be convinced too much of the necessity of enjoying this union. Your union to the *first* Adam has engulfed you in a legal, a spiritual, and exposed you also to an eternal death. Nor is it possible to obtain deliverance from, or security against death, in any of these acceptations, but by being united to the *second* Adam. O! let me beg of you to use seasonable concern for this unutterable blessing. Without it you are undone for ever; your *bodies* must not only die, but your *souls* sink to eternal perdition. If Christ is not in you, you are *reprobates*, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. heaping up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; hardened offenders, forcing a passage to eternal flames, through warnings, counsels, convictions, operations of reason and conscience.

Permit me to exhort those of you in whom Christ dwells, by his Spirit, to endeavour in  
humble



humble dependence upon his strength to maintain a life and conversation corresponding to the greatness of this honour and privilege. Jesus hath graciously secured you from the sting of death, brought life and immortality to light by his glorious gospel, set an open door before you which no man can shut, and will shortly receive you to Himself, that where He is, you shall for ever be. Let these considerations have due influence, and free you from slavish fear of death. Why fear that which for ever secures you from all sin and sorrow? Which safely brings you to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven? John heard a voice from heaven, commanding him to write—"Blessed are the dead which *die* in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours" Rev. xiv. 13.—Be therefore faithful unto death, and you shall receive crowns of life. O! what an infinite debt of gratitude do we owe to the blessed Jesus for these animating hopes! Eternity itself will be too short to utter all *His* praise who hath ransomed us from the power of the grave, and redeemed us from death. Glory for ever be ascribed to his sacred name! Amen.

Ver. 11.

*But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

**I**N the preceding verse the Apostle informed us that the death of believers was not *total*, the *body* only being dead because of sin. Here he assures us that it shall not be *final*. For, as a consequence of union to Christ, and the in-dwelling of his Spirit, *He that raised up Christ from the dead* would also *quicken the mortal bodies* of his people, *by his Spirit which dwelt in them*.

Thus we are taught, that the infinite mercy of our God, and the glorious efficacy of the salvation of our divine Redeemer, extend to both body and soul. Only the latter possesses eternal life sooner than the former.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body from the dead, is a doctrine of obvious importance. *For if there be no resurrection from the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. They also who have fallen asleep in Christ, have perished; and we, having hope in Christ only in this life, are of all men most miserable,* 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14, 18, 19.—As so great a stress is laid upon this doctrine, we certainly ought to be established in its truth. I shall therefore,

I. Prove the doctrine of the resurrection.

II. Shew the *Author* of it.

I. Let

I. Let us *prove* the doctrine. I beg leave to observe, that this is a doctrine of pure revelation. What is called the light of nature, gives no light here—no intimation whatever of it. A celebrated Christian Father\* informs us, that “Every sect of philosophers denied the resurrection of the body.” We are certain that the Athenian philosophers of the *Stoic* and *Epicurean* sects mocked Paul for advancing it; deeming him no better than a *babbler*, Acts xvii. 18, 32. We are therefore indebted to revelation solely for this doctrine. In the prosecution of our design, we shall shew this doctrine to be both *probable* and *certain*.

1. 'Tis *probable*. Probable from a proper consideration of the divine perfections.

No objection to the doctrine can arise from the *difficulty* of accomplishment. GOD IS OMNIPOTENT. Is the *resurrection* of the body a work of greater difficulty than its first *creation*? To me, the *latter* appears a greater exertion of omnipotence than the *former*; and whoever properly considers the *one*, cannot consistently hesitate concerning, or deny the *other*. If any person should urge, as an objection, the singularly great transmutations which take place in human bodies at death,—some in flames reduced to ashes, and those ashes driven abroad by winds; others devoured by wild beasts, and incorporated with their substance; and many buried under the boisterous billows of the main, and there eat up by those very fish on which men perhaps have afterwards fed;—my answer would be—GOD IS OMNISCIENT. Though the resur-

\* Tertullian.



rection of the self-same individual body, after such astonishing changes, appears to engulph *human* thought in absolute mystery, yet from the union of *omniscience* and *omnipotence* in God, it might be reasonably expected, all doubt of its credibility should for ever vanish. By the *first* of these attributes, God perfectly *knows* every atom essential to the constitution of the same body, however and wherever existing in earth, air, fire, or flood; and by the *second*, He is perfectly *able* to collect all these together for the constitution of the same bodies which once existed. The attribute of divine *justice* concurs with *omnipotence* and *omniscience* to prove the credibility of the resurrection of the body. The *bodies* of both saints and sinners are employed with their souls in obedience to, or rebellion against, God; and justice requires that they should share with them in the future consequences, and necessarily supposes the resurrection of the bodies of both for this purpose. Under this head I might, with some good men, note certain *types* of this resurrection; as the deliverance of Jonah, Mat. xii. 39, 40.—Ezekiel's vision, chap. xxxvii. &c.—and the actual resurrections recorded in scripture: But I humbly presume enough has been advanced to prove that this doctrine is *probable*. We hope it will shortly appear to be,

2. *Certain*. That it is so, we think will be obvious from—positive testimonies of scripture, and—certain doctrines which necessarily imply this of the resurrection.

1. *Positive testimonies of scripture*. From Exod. iii. 6. where God styles himself *The God of Abraham,*

*ham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;* our blessed Lord, in his conference with the captious *Sadducees*, proved, to their confutation, the doctrine of the resurrection. The *Sadducees*, it is well known, denied the resurrection of the dead. They acknowledged the writings of *Moses* only as canonical.—The obscurity with which this doctrine was taught in those writings, is supposed to have contributed to their denial of it.—From those writings therefore our Lord proved the resurrection, alleging, that it was *because they knew not the Scriptures, nor the power of God*, that they denied it. For, saith he, TOUCHING the RESURRECTION of the DEAD, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?* God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Mat. xxi. 31, 32. As if He should say, “To whomsoever God is a God, He is the God of their whole persons; so that, not only do the souls of such enter into heaven when separated from the body, but their bodies shall be raised to partake also of the happiness of heaven.”

The next testimony I produce is that of *Job*. Confident of the truth of his testimony, and animated by its glorious import, he introduces it with peculiar solemnity und earnestness. *Oh that my words were now written, oh that they were printed in a book; that they were graven with an iron pen, and lead, in the rock for ever!* FOR I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH, AND THAT HE SHALL STAND AT THE LAST DAY UPON THE EARTH; AND THOUGH AFTER MY SKIN WORMS DESTROY THIS BODY, YET IN

MY FLESH SHALL I SEE GOD, WHOM I SHALL SEE FOR MYSELF, AND MINE EYES SHALL BEHOLD, AND NOT ANOTHER; THOUGH MY REINS BE CONSUMED IN ME. Job xix. 23—27. This has appeared to both Jewish and Christian interpreters a decisive proof of the resurrection. I shall only add Dan. xii. 2. *Many of them who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* On these words I cannot produce a better comment than that of our Lord's, John v. 28, 29. *The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his (Christ's) voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.*—From the New Testament I produce no proofs—not from want or scarcity of them there, but from such superabundance as to render citations endless and unnecessary. We proceed to observe,

2. That certain doctrines necessarily suppose this of the resurrection. (1) God's free choice of his people to eternal life, Eph. i. 4. He has chosen their *whole* persons, not their *souls* only, but their *bodies* also, and consequently *both* shall enjoy eternal life. (2) The *commission* given Christ in the covenant of man's redemption proves the same. Christ informs us what that commission was, John vi. 39. *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should LOSE NOTHING, but RAISE IT UP at the LAST DAY.* And for this purpose, he is invested with *all power in heaven and in earth*, Mat. xxviii. 18. and is able to sub-  
due



*due even all things to Himself*, Phil. ii. 21. This doctrine is inferable from, (3) Believers' union to Christ. Their bodies are expressly called *members of Christ*, 1 Cor. vi. 15.; and can we suppose it possible that death should for ever triumph over the members of Christ? Surely no! for *them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him*, 1 Thes. iv. 4. (4) The sanctification of the Spirit gives additional evidence to this truth. The body, as well as the soul, is the subject of the sanctifying operations of the Spirit; agreeable to 1 Thes. v. 23. And if so, shall not the *desire* of the Spirit *to the work of his own hands*, Job xiv. 15. appear by a joyful resurrection to eternal life? The resurrection of Christ affords an additional argument for that of his people, seeing he arose as the *first fruits of them that slept*. He is so called in allusion to the *harvest* of glorified bodies which he will raise at the last day, by his irresistible power, Phil. iii. 4. We proceed to inquire concerning,

II. The *Author* of this great work. The external works of God (of which number the resurrection is one) are common to the sacred Three in the adorable Godhead. Hence we find the resurrection ascribed to all Three—To the FATHER, 2 Cor. vi. 14. *God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power*. So again, 2 Cor. iv. 14. *He who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you*.—To the SON. *For as the FATHER raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the SON quickeneth whom he will—that all men should honour the SON even as they honour the FATHER*, John v. 21, 23. The  
Son.

*Son* it is who shall *change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body; &c.*—To the SPIRIT also is this great work ascribed in my text, for this resurrection is accomplished *by the Spirit who dwelleth in believers.*

With regard to the *means* by which the resurrection will be accomplished, we have little to offer. We read of the *voice of Christ*; the *voice of the Archangel*; the *trump of God*; and of the Lord's descending with a *shout*. By all which terms some preternatural *noise* seems intended, which

“ Shall pour a dreadful note; the piercing call  
Shall rattle in the center of the ball;  
Th' extended circuit of creation shake,  
The living die with fear, the dead awake.”

Oh Sirs! what will be your portion in that great day? Shall *you* be numbered with the blest; or left to cry in vain to rocks and mountains to cover you? Oh remember that a joyful resurrection is *their* portion only who are united to Christ and possess his Spirit. From your present principles and conduct you may as certainly know your future portion, as the husbandman his future harvest from the seed he sows. The experience of a *first* resurrection is necessary to secure a *second* to immortal glory, Rev. xx. 6.

How consolatory should our doctrine prove to every real Christian under all bodily infirmities, sickness, prospect of death, and loss of Christian relations! Your blessed Redeemer hath secured to your bodies a joyful resurrection; your *flesh shall rest in hope*. Your bodies  
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at death are only *sown*, sown indeed in corruption, dishonour, and weakness; but they *shall be raised* in incorruption, glory, and power, 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44. For, “shall *man alone* be sown in *barren* ground, less privileged than *grain* on which he feeds?” No! When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory, Col. ii. 4. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

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Ver. 12.

*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

THESE words form an inference, drawn from the preceding observations made by the Apostle. They are evidently intended to convey the idea of our moral obligations arising from interest in the privileges which he had just enumerated. The usual method of this eminent servant of Christ, in the exercise of his ministry to the people of God, is, clearly to explain, and solidly to prove, their exalted privileges resulting from union with Him in whom they are blessed with *all* spiritual blessings; and then to enforce the performance of corresponding obligations. Thus should every Christian minister proceed; guarding against a licentious abuse of the inexhaustible grace of God on the one hand; and on the other, the merciless conduct



duct of the Egyptian task-masters, in urging duty without exhibiting adequate means of performance.

The inference which constitutes our text comprises an *antithesis*, though one member of it be suppressed. It is plain that when the Apostle observes that we *are debtors*, negatively, *not to the flesh, to live after the flesh*, he intimates a *positive* idea, that we *ARE debtors to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit*. But this implication he thought unnecessary to express, being easily and necessarily supplied by the attentive reader.

To be debtors, in the sense of the text, is to be under indispensable moral obligations of subjection and acceptable obedience to the will of God. I shall point out the *sources* of these obligations; and then endeavour to enforce the obligations themselves.

I. With regard to the *sources* of moral obligation to God, they are as various as the relations are in which He stands to us, and we to Him. He stands related to us all as a CREATOR, GOVERNOR, BENEFactor;—and I hope, to many of us, as a REDEEMER. In each of these characters we lie under indispensable obligations. But, before I take particular notice of the obligations arising from these relations, let me bestow some notice on the *negative* assertion of the Apostle,—*We are debtors NOT to the flesh*. The term *flesh* often means human nature, or the body; and there is certainly a just debt of subordinate regard due to it, *for no man ever yet hated his own flesh* (or ought), *but nourisheth and cherisheth it*. The rigorous austerities inflicted on the body by the devotees of Antichrist,  
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are fit acts of *that* devotion only, of which *ignorance is the mother*.—But the term in our text means *corrupt nature*; and, *to live after the flesh* is to indulge the carnal inclinations and corrupt affections thence arising, and to act accordingly. Now, saith the Apostle, *we are not debtors to the flesh in this sense*. We are under no sort of obligation whatever to comply with its unjust demands. Flesh and sin will make a variety of demands upon us, and urge them with importunity. But they are *usurpers*; and our professed allegiance to the KING OF KINGS requires us to refuse compliance with their requisitions. He is *the Lord our God, and we are to have no other God beside Him*. Every voluntary transgression is a tacit denial of the justice of Jehovah's claim to the title of KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. He *hath* freed us from the galling yoke of the dominion of sin. Let us stand fast in that liberty, and consider aright the *end* of our emancipation; and remember, that to God we are debtors,

( ) AS CREATOR. He having made us, and not we ourselves, His we are, and Him should we serve. 'Tis man's chief end to *glorify* God. This is his proper *business*; and to *enjoy* Him, constitutes his proper *bliss*. Is not every one justly entitled to the fruits of his own work? *Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not the milk of the flock?* 1 Cor. ix. 7. God is our potter, and we are the clay, Jer. xviii. 6. and should we not be concerned to be vessels meet for the Master's use? 2 Tim. ii. 21. He is the *Father of our Spirits*, Heb. xii. 9. and the  
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Former of our bodies. Now, *a Son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts.* Mal. i. 6. We are debtors to God, (2) as our moral Governor. He possesses uncontrollable power and dominion over all his creatures. This authority is founded on his majesty and supremacy; and from these sources the prophet Jeremiah, chap. x. 6, 7. infers the duty of the creature. *Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might; who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to Thee doth it appertain.* All creatures do in every respect necessarily depend upon God for existence, power, and operation; and hence arise indispensable and *universal* obligations on men to obey the divine will. The same claim arises from the character of God as (3) A *Benefactor*. It is a principle universally adopted amongst men, that favours conferred lay the recipients of them under obligations to the bestower. Hence, no complaints are more feelingly made than the want of gratitude in those whom we have obliged. But who of the sons of men have laid us under obligations of this sort, comparable to those of the ever-blessed God? In Him we live, move, and have our being. He hath preserved, fed, and clothed us; granted us friends, and the sweets of friendship; and it is of his mercy alone that we are not deservedly consumed. If, on the principles of morality, those are considered as detestable characters in society who are devoid of gratitude towards man, what title shall we bestow on those who  
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are destitute of it towards God? Surely some dreadful poison must prevail in that heart, sufficient to taint every principle, which is destitute of a sense of the unwearied bounty of a God. Now the obligations arising from these relative characters of God are *universal*. To these I add one more, which is *peculiar* to the people of God; and it is that of, (4) A Redeemer. God, under the endearing character of the *God of all grace*, has the most powerful claims to the grateful obedience of his people. Their holy obedience is one eminent design of the love of the FATHER in their *eternal choice*. *They were chosen before the foundation of the world TO BE HOLY AND BLAMELESS; chosen through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; that is, through faith and holiness*, Eph. i. 4. 1 Thes. ii. 12.—It was also the design of the *redeeming love* of the SON. *He gave himself for us, that he might REDEEM US from ALL INIQUITY, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. He gave himself for his church, that he might SANCTIFY and CLEANSE it*, Tit. ii. 14. and Eph. v. 26, 27.—Nor was it less the design of the *operative love* of the ETERNAL SPIRIT. *He creates believers a-new in Christ Jesus for the acceptable performance of those good works in which God hath pre-ordained them to walk*, Eph. ii. 10. *He works in them to will and to do the divine good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. So that we conclude, with Dr. Owen, “If God’s sovereignty over us is to be owned, if his love towards us is to be regarded, if the whole work of the ever-blessed Trinity in us and for us be of any moment,—our obedience is necessary.” I now proceed to endeavour,

II. To

II. To *enforce* these obligations. I am not unconscious of the inefficacy of merely human efforts for this purpose; but equally conscious that it is ordinarily in the *use of means* that the divine Spirit exerts his influence; it is therefore unquestionably proper to use them. Let me then remind you in general of the *justice* of the claims of God on your supreme regard and active services. You have no authority to yield either your minds or bodies to the service of sin and Satan, the irreconcilable enemies of God. They were not created for such an infamous purpose. You who are parents or masters, think you have indisputable right to the obedience of your children and servants. Is not God, by right of creation, both your Father and Master? If so, where is his honour and fear? Will you, for the sake of denying your obligations, deny God to be thus related to you? If so, what are you? Self-originated sovereign atoms accountable to none? If this is the quintessence of absurdity, how do you exculpate yourselves from blame for the violation of natural and therefore indefeasible obligation? Let your children or servants serve you as you serve God, and you will soon let them know the injustice and impropriety of their procedure. *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest thyself the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?* Rom. ii. 3. Thou wilt be miserably mistaken if thou dost! The justice of the claims of God upon thee renders peculiarly atrocious your detention of his unalienable rights; and it will be a righteous thing for God to render thee a just retribution for it. Sin is the violation of infinite

finite obligation. It is therefore an infinite evil, and merits an infinite punishment; which a creature being incapable of enduring in *degree*, it must in *duration*.

Again, God is your sovereign Lord, on whose infinite supremacy are founded additional obligations. Your refusal is *rebellion*. And what treatment can *rebels against God* expect from his hands? *O consider these things ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you!* Once more, is there no evil in the most manifest *ingratitude*? Has not God's general goodness and mercy followed you all the days of your lives? Who listened to your infant cries, and infused peculiar tenderness into the hearts of your parents for you? Who preserved you in the dangerous paths of childhood and youth? Kept you in health, or restored you from sickness? Who has hitherto fed you with food convenient for you? Who continues you in life, and in the reach of the divine mercy, while myriads have been cut off who have not exceeded, perhaps not *equalled* you in sin? Many, many good works God has shewn you and done for you; for which of these do you continue your hostilities against Him? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise?* If no penitential pangs seize your breasts for your monstrous ingratitude, you must be dead in trespasses and sins. O cry to God to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit in you, for great is your need of both.

You on whom lies the additional obligation arising from redeeming love—True believers,  
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effectually called and united to Christ, the fountain of blessedness; surely I may hope better things of you than I can of those who are still in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. O! the infinite obligations arising from everlasting love; complete redemption in the blood of the Lamb; that distinguishing grace by which you have been effectually called out of nature's darkness into marvellous light, while myriads have been left behind to perish! Consider, I beseech you, my brethren, your obligations, and daily apply to the fountain of all fulness for suitable and seasonable succours. You are *the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified; called to shew forth his praise*. If you do not, who will? Oh may the love of Christ constrain us, thus to judge, that we should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. By the mercies of God I beseech you to present your bodies and souls as reasonable sacrifices to His glory. Praise is comely for the upright. Your grateful concern to live answerable to your obligations will be an evidence to yourselves and others of your religious sincerity. You must, I hope, feel either a grateful sense of the divine goodness, and of the immense debt of gratitude you owe for it; or a degree of sincere penitential sorrow for your want of it. Both are graces of the divine Spirit; and the one or the other of them is, I doubt not, your happy experience. Once more let me remind you, that your sufficiency for every divine purpose is of God. He is able to make all grace abound towards you. Let your total depend-



dependence, living and dying, ever be on Him ; and shortly you shall praise and adore Him perfectly in heaven.

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## Ver. 13.

*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

**I**N the preceding verse the Apostle had expressed the indispensable obligations of the people of God by affirming that they were *debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh, but* (as is necessarily implied) *debtors to the Spirit to live after the Spirit.* In this verse, it is evidently his intention to *enforce* the believer's obligations by pointing out the very different consequences of these different modes of living ; *for*, saith he in our text, *if ye live, &c.*

Before I proceed to consider, particularly, the doctrines in the text, it may be proper to give a general explanation of its parts.

*If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.*—We are not to infer, from this hypothetical mode of expression, that the Apostle admitted the possibility of a real believer's *so living* after the flesh as *to die eternally*. This would be a contradiction to his doctrine in general concerning the final security of the people of God. But he means to inform us, either of the *connection* between *such* living and eternal death ; or, with regard to the believer's *life of comfort* in communion with God, he might possibly *so* regard the solicitation of the flesh as to lose, at least, *much* of this life, and *partially* die. Perhaps he intended to convey  
*both*

both these ideas, and inform us that sin deprived unbelievers of *eternal life*, and real believers of *comfort and consolation*.

*But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* The term *body*, here, means the remains of indwelling sin. The *deeds* of the body, mean not only outward acts of sin, but internal inclinations to it. These are to be *mortified*. In the original the word is, literally, *put to death*; what is called, Gal. v. 24. *crucified*. Death by crucifixion, though *sure*, being *slow* and *gradual*. The principal *agent* of this work is the *divine Spirit*. *If ye through the Spirit, &c.* None other is adequate to the performance of it.

Mortification of sin is either *meritorious* or *real*. The *first* refers to the believer's union to Christ, by virtue of which the *old man* is said to be *crucified with Him*, that the *body of sin* might be *destroyed*, Rom. vi. 6. The *second* originates in the efficacious operation of the Spirit, and is either *initial* in regeneration, or *progressive* by continued sanctifying influence. Mortification of sin is, in our text, represented as being related to *life*; but we are not to suppose these are related as *cause* and *effect*, for life spiritual and eternal is the free gift of God; but only as *means* and *end*, God having appointed the gradual destruction of sin, root and branch, as a necessary mean of enjoying spiritual consolation and eternal life.

Having formerly considered the doctrine of the first part of our text, our remaining observations shall be limited to the second only; and we observe,

I. That

I. That true believers, notwithstanding their freedom from the dominion of sin, and their possession of the divine Spirit, are yet under necessity of using constant efforts to mortify the remains of sin in them.

Thus the Apostle exhorts those who were *risen with Christ*, and who *when Christ appeared should appear with Him in glory, to mortify their members which were upon the earth.* Col. iii. 1, 4, 5. And our blessed Lord informs us, that even those branches in Him which bore fruit, required to be purged in order to bring forth *more* of it, John xv. 2. The Apostle himself found it necessary to practise his own doctrine, and *keep under his body*, and bring it into subjection, 1 Cor. ix. 17.

The reasons for this conduct are obvious. (1) There are remains of sin in every believer's heart. *If we say that we have none, we deceive ourselves.* The inward man needs *renewing day by day*, 2 Cor. iv. 16. We know but *in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. and ought to *grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, daily, 2 Pet. v. 18. Again, (2) Sin not only exists, but *acts*, and acts according to its malignant nature, inclining at different periods to every abomination. *It wars against the soul*, 1 Pet. ii. 11. *against the law of the mind*, Rom. vii. 23. and *lusteth against the Spirit*, Gal. v. 17. It is a restless, operative principle; and those least conscious of its power, are most under its dominion. If, therefore, sin be not mortified in the root and inclination, it may arise to actual commission, to the great dishonour of God, and the distress of the believer.



An unchaste thought may terminate in the impure deed: A covetous desire in some dishonest act, &c. *Resist the beginnings of evil*, is a precept which ought never to be forgotten. We should remember, (3) That as disciples of Christ we are called upon *to deny ourselves*; to be *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God; to *grow in grace*, desiring the sincere milk of the word for this purpose. As all this necessarily supposes the progressive mortification of sin, there can be no reasonable doubt but that this is the indispensable duty of every believer. But are his own efforts sufficient to secure his success in this work?—Far from it! We therefore observe,

II. That the principal efficient cause of the successful performance of this duty, is, the *Divine Spirit*. “If ye through *the Spirit*,” &c.

The ingenuity of self-sufficient men has devised a variety of other means for the accomplishment of this work. Perceiving the established connexion of sin and death, and alarmed at the prospect, self-love hath operated in various modes for deliverance from the object of their dread. But, erroneous in their choice and use of *means*, they have ever been disappointed of their *end*. Some use *wrong* means to effect their deliverance from sin, as the Papists in their penances, &c.; others use right means in a wrong manner. They pray, search the scriptures, and hear them preached, but *trust* in these duties as if they were *ends* and not *means*. No man unappointed of God will ever obtain his blessing; nor even those which  
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He hath appointed, unless used *as* He hath appointed them.

Be assured then, brethren, that the only effectual Agent of this important work is the divine Spirit. Use the means *as* means, but trust in Him alone. He was promised for the gracious end of producing in us a new heart, and renewing a right spirit. To take away the stony heart out of our flesh, and cause us to walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments, and do them, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Amongst the myriads of blessings our blessed Jesus hath secured to us, *this* possesses a conspicuous place—our *sanctification*. The SPIRIT is the appointed agent of it. As you depend solely on the blood and obedience of Christ for *justification*; so must you depend on the agency of the divine Spirit for *sanctification*. The good work begun in regeneration, he carries on by successive influences and operations; gradually mortifying the remains of sin, and exciting into lively exercise the graces which he hath produced. And may we never forget, that He operates by stirring us up to use aright, diligence and perseverance in the means divinely appointed for these purposes. Every divinely-appointed mean should be diligently used; for we observe,

III. That the vigour and comfort of our spiritual life very much depends upon the mortification of sin in us. Not that it does so *necessarily*. For some who have been very careful to experience the weakening of remaining depravity, have been much exercised with sorrow and distress; as seems to have been the case with *Heman*, Psa. lxxxviii. Nor is the mor-

tifying of sin the *immediate* cause of consolation; *this* flows from the Spirit of adoption, testifying to our consciences that we are the children of God. But, *ordinarily*, it proves a mean of spiritual comfort, by removing the cause of sorrow and depression. This is *sin*. Sin *weakens* and *darkens* the soul. The more it is subdued, the more spiritual light and strength will, consequently, be enjoyed. God is the fountain of felicity. In his favour is life. The light of his countenance gladdens the hearts of his people, infinitely more than the increase of corn, wine, and oil, does the hearts of the ungodly. But, sin separates between us and our God. It hides his face from us. Should we not therefore exert every effort to be delivered from an evil so injurious to our souls?

From the subject in general—we may learn, (1) That the life of the real Christian is a life of continual exercise. The soil of the heart needs continual cultivation. The field of the slothful, and the vineyard of the man void of understanding, will be overgrown with thorns and nettles, Prov. xxiv. 30, 31. (2) The necessity of crosses and afflictions. These under divine influence are efficacious in promoting the great work of the mortification of sin. There is *a needs be* for heaviness through manifold temptations. By sanctified afflictions *the iniquity of Jacob is purged*, and this is the intended fruit of them—to take away his sin. Isa. xxvii. 9. (3) The number of real Christians is indeed small. To be convinced of this, you have only to try professing Christians by the criterions of self-denial; purity and humility of mind;



mind; zeal for God; and the exercise of brotherly love, &c.

Let me conclude, by exhorting you, my believing brethren, to diligence and persevering zeal in the important work of mortification. Consider, much of your peace and prosperity depends upon it. So also the glory of God, and the advantage of mankind in Society. These are the ends which give value to life, and render it worth possessing. Exercise faith daily on the precious promises of your God. Maintain close communion with Him. *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*, Gal. v. 16. Study the vanity of all earthly objects; realize the solemn moments of dissolution, and act *now*, as you will *then* wish to have acted. And never forget that it is *through the Spirit* that we must mortify the deeds of the body. Renew your applications daily therefore to the eternal Spirit for happy experience of his sanctifying energy.—Beware of grieving this divine Agent by allowed negligence, or criminal indulgence. Recollect the promises of his aid, and plead those promises at the throne of grace in ardent prayer. Thus diligently proceed. In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand. And in this way you may indulge a pleasing hope that your souls shall become *as watered gardens and as streams of water, whose waters fail not*.

Ver. 14.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

**I**N these words the Apostle confirms the doctrine of the latter clause of the preceding verse. He had affirmed, that a connexion subsisted between the mortification of sin, and the enjoyment of consolation and eternal life. Here he proves his affirmation by informing us, that all who are influenced and actuated by the divine Spirit to the mortifying of sin, are assuredly the sons of God, and consequently, heirs of eternal life, which in due time they shall perfectly enjoy. Let us particularly consider,

I. The *import* of this additional office of the divine Spirit as a *leader*—LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

II. The dignity of those who are led by Him,—THEY ARE THE SONS OF GOD. Of this dignity, the leading mentioned in the text, is an evidence. And then we shall observe,

III. That the leading influence of the divine Spirit is *essential* to the character of the sons of God, for—AS MANY, and no more, *as are led by the spirit of God*, THEY ARE THE SONS OF GOD.

I. The *import*, &c.—Not to say all that might be said upon this copious subject, I shall attend to what seems essential to it only.

The leading then of the divine Spirit, seems necessarily to include, 1. His special guidance. This belongs to the idea of *leading*; and supposes

poses the insufficiency of man to lead or guide himself; *the way of man not being in himself, nor in man that walketh to direct his own steps*, Jer. x. 23. God hath often promised to guide his people by his spirit. *To guide them continually*, Isa. lviii. 11.; *to guide them with his counsel, and afterwards receive them to glory*, Psa. lxxiii. 34.; *to teach them to profit, and to lead them in the way which they should go, &c.* Isa. xlviii. 17. The accomplishment of these promises is included in this leading of the Spirit. 2. His *powerful influence*, inclining and enabling to follow his guidance, by avoiding what is evil, and cleaving to what is good. The divine light which the Spirit imparts, is not only *directive* but *persuasive*. Such motives are by Him produced, as powerfully captivate the soul, and induce it to forsake the toys of time, for the glorious realities of eternity. 3. It imports *co-operation*, or *active concurrence* with the directive and persuasive influences of the blessed Spirit—just as when one person leads another, both the person *leading* and the person *led*, have their respective motion, and concur therein. The Spirit does not influence men by mere *impulse* as if they were *machines*; but, as a moral Agent, He informs the understanding, determines the choice of the will, and engages the affections in the active pursuit of what He *presents* to the soul, as possessing super-eminent **excellency**. He imparts strength for this divine purpose; so that God's people are enabled, in **some** humble degree, to walk becoming the **divine wisdom** and knowledge with which they are guided.



Let us now consider a few of the circumstances attending the Spirit's leading. It may be enquired, 1. To *what* the Spirit leads?—In general to *all* good: Particularly to what may be arranged under the heads of *truth* and *holiness*. These, properly understood, are always united. The Spirit leads to both.—To TRUTH. He is *the spirit of truth*, and leads the people of God into *all* requisite and necessary *truth*, John xvi. 13.—To HOLINESS. *The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth*, Eph. viii. 9. He excites pious affections, *directing the heart into the love of God*, Thes. iii. 5. and *shedding it abroad in the heart*, Rom. v. 4. 2. By what *rule* does the Spirit lead?—By the written word of God. This is our rule, and the blessed Spirit is our guide. *Order my steps in thy word*, Psa. cxix. 133. is a prayer dictated by the Spirit of God. *Immediate* revelations and impulses are expected by none now but enthusiasts. 3. In what *manner* does He lead?—With *efficacy* and *delight*—*Efficacy*; powerfully inducing those in whom he resides *to walk in God's statutes, and to keep his judgments and do them*, Ezek. xxxvi. 27.—*Delight*; making *truly willing* in the day of his divine power, Psa. cx. 3. He operates by *leading*, not *compelling*; and God's people voluntarily *follow*, and are not *forced*.—*Earthly* princes often *compel* with lawless violence, injured subjects into their iniquitous service; but our gracious God *draws* us into his truly divine and noble service, by the irresistible allurements of his infinite love revealed in the Gospel, and shed abroad in the heart. Thus the Spirit leads. God grant we may all  
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in this manner be led by Him! Let us now consider,

II. The *dignity* of those who are led by the Spirit in the manner described.—*They are the SONS OF GOD.*

*All men* may be considered as sons of God by *creation*. But this is a sense of the terms common to the devils themselves, and hence, no peculiar advantage can arise to any man from this relation to God.

Believers are the sons of God, 1. by *regeneration*; in which they are made partakers of a *divine nature*, and resemble their Heavenly Father, that they may live to Him here, and with Him for ever hereafter. They are *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*, John i. 13. and possess dispositions becoming their heavenly origin, aspiring after the enjoyment of God, the fountain of happiness; and conformity to his moral image, as the appointed mean of this enjoyment. 2. By *marriage* to the Lord Jesus, “for,” as *Witfus* observes, “when we become his spouse, then we pass with him into the Father’s family, and the Father calls us by the endearing name of *daughter*, Psa. xlv. 10. and the Lord Jesus calls her also his *sister*, whom he names his *spouse*, Sol. Song v. 1, 2. God provided by his law, *that if a man betrothed his maid-servant unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters*, Exod. xxi. 9. In the same manner he is pleased to deal with elect souls.” 3. By *adoption*, which is “an act of God’s free grace, whereby his people are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the

sons of God." Believers thus become of the *household of God*, Eph. ii. 19. and heirs of a heavenly inheritance, ver. 17.

Thus dignified are the people of God. They have a *royal pedigree*, being *sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty*. A *divine nature*, resembling their Heavenly Father. They are in a *marriage-relation* to the Son of God himself, who is *the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely*. And, as the sons of God, to what a glorious inheritance are they entitled! ALL THINGS ARE THEIRS. The things of *this* world as far as they are for their *real* good; and the unutterable joys and honours of that which is to come, 1 Cor. iii. 22. Happy are the people that are in such a case!—David thought it a very great honour to be an *earthly* king's son-in-law, Sam. xviii. 23. but how infinitely greater is the honour of being a son of the KING of KINGS?—Now of this dignity the possession of the Spirit is a sure evidence. BECAUSE *ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts*, Gal. iv. 6. The Spirit's guidance of the children of God, is,

III. *Essential* to their character as such; for AS MANY, and no more, as are led by the spirit of God, THEY are the sons of God.

God will not own them as his children who are destitute of his spirit. Try therefore *your* spirits, brethren, whether they are of God, because many false spirits are gone out into the world, 1 John iv. 1. There is the *spirit of the world*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. by which its possessors are *worldly minded*; greedy of its gain, ambitious of its honours, and greatly afraid of being *sin-*  
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*gular* by striving to enter the strait gate; and, rather than be *out of fashion*, will risk an eternal overthrow by mingling with the many who walk in the broad road to destruction.—There is the spirit of *seduction*, 1 Tim. iv. 1. by which many are led, filled with carnal confidence, “boasting of inward joys and sins forgiven, while they are slaves to lust.” This spirit, diametrically opposite to that by which the people of God are led, leads to *error* and *sin*. These are as closely united as *truth* and *holiness*. Many other spirits there are which draw the minds of men into fatal delusions, both of sentiment and practice.

The sons of God are distinguished by their possession of that Spirit, who proves his divinity by the divinity of his effects; humbling the soul, exalting the Redeemer, and powerfully promoting holiness. The union of believers to Jesus is the origin of their reception of his Spirit, and additional supplies of it are received by faith.—May we richly possess this substantial proof of being indeed the children of God!

Permit me, my friends, with all the affectionate concern of a serious well-wisher to your immortal interests, to intreat you impartially to examine yourselves concerning your possession of this evidence of sonship to God. By what spirit are you led? You cannot reasonably suppose, that you are guided by the divine Spirit if you are in pursuit of sinful objects. Would it not be an approach to blasphemy to suppose that the Spirit of God led you into dishonest methods of getting gain, or of pursuing the

pomps and vanities of this present evil world? Much less can it be supposed, that you are under his guidance who can blaspheme the name of a dreadful God, break his sabbaths, drown your senses in intemperance, and indulge pride, malice, and revenge. If only those are the sons of God who are led by His spirit; whose sons are you who are led by an opposite one? Our Lord informs you—John viii. 44. May you fall under the salutary conviction, and cry to God to deliver you from this horrid relation! Again,

Is it so that the sons of God themselves need the guidance, &c. of his Spirit? How then should it be possible for the sons of the devil, who deny the godhead and influence of the eternal Spirit to be right in their notions and sentiments of true religion! Light is not more necessary to perceive and distinguish colours, than the Spirit is in order to know and follow truth. What wonder is it, that such should deny the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, who are destitute of that Spirit by whom alone they can be rightly understood?—May the God of grace ever preserve you from such blind guides!

Let the real christian reduce his knowledge into practice, and depend upon the blessed Spirit for constant direction. *Lean not unto thine own understanding.* Be humbled under a sense of thy remaining ignorance and folly, and daily apply to the Spirit for a removal of both. If you are sensible of your guilt and ignorance, and led to Christ and the Spirit for their removal; why then you are indeed *led by the Spirit*, and consequently,

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*The sons of God*; and oh! seriously and gratefully behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God! 1 John iii. 1. This is a blessed and honourable relation which can never be destroyed. What sanctity of disposition, and dignity of character, does it justly demand of us! You are by it entitled to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you; and you are reserved for it by the power of God your heavenly Father. Let the consideration of this elevate your minds above the world, and *be ye followers of God as dear children, walking in love.* Eph. v. 1.

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Ver. 15.

*For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

THESE words constitute a proof of the contents of the preceding verse. The Apostle had affirmed that the sons of God were influenced and *led* by his Spirit, and here he confirms his doctrine by presenting to our observation an eminent *effect* of that Spirit, which is,—ability to approach, or call upon God as a Father.

It appears to have been a rule adopted and invariably pursued by the Apostle, after having *proposed* a doctrine, then to *confirm* it. In this procedure he is a proper pattern for the imitation of both ministers and people; both of whom ought to be ready to *render a reason*, not only



only for the hope that is in them, but for the principles which they embrace, and for the doctrines which they advance. "Powerful reasoning," says an eloquent writer [Saurin], "should be the soul of all our sermons.—Speak with authority, open all the treasures of erudition, give full scope to a lively and sublime imagination, harmonize your periods; what will all your discourses without reasoning be?—a noise, a sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal."—By this universally approved principle may we ever proceed, and possess "in seldom-meeting harmony combin'd," solidity of judgment and warmth of affection.

In discussing the subjects of our text, it appears proper,

I. To inquire into the meaning of the different Spirits here mentioned—The *Spirit of bondage*, and the *Spirit of adoption*.

II. To consider particularly the *effect* attributed to the *latter* of these Spirits as possessed by the sons of God:—Ability to cry, *Abba, Father*.

I. With regard to the meaning of the Spirits of which our text treats, we are not to suppose that they are properly distinct spirits or agents, but different operations of one and the self-same Spirit, in the same person, at different periods. By reason of the diversity of the operations, graces, and gifts, of the divine Spirit, He is presented to us sometimes in the *plural* number; as, Rev. i. 4. *the SEVEN SPIRITS which are before his throne*. And in Sol. Song, iv. 16. He is represented under the metaphors of *the North and of the South wind*, for the same reason

that He is here as the Spirit of bondage and of adoption; and that is, because of the difference of his operations, operating first as the piercing North wind, or Spirit of bondage; and then as the warm effusive South wind, or Spirit of adoption.

By the *Spirit of bondage* then we are to understand the divine Spirit of God, "Not" (says the sublime Charnock) "as if [HE] bound the soul, but because He *discovers those* bonds which are by nature upon it, lays open the judgments of God against it, gives a sight of those fetters which are clapt on by sin and Satan, and applies the law as a ministration of death, as that whereby the man is concluded or shut up under sin, and at present sees no way to escape: Now the natural consequence and effect of this work must needs be *fear*." Under His operations in this character, *destruction from God becomes a terror to the sinner, and by reason of His highness, he cannot endure*, Job xxxi. 23. A load of guilt oppresses the sinner's conscience, from which he can no more free himself than he can suspend a storm in the air. "His fears start up alarmed, and o'er life's narrow verge look down, on—a fathomless abyfs;" and with an ardour unfelt before, he cries to God for mercy.

These salutary convictions constitute the ordinary means by which the Spirit effects a cordial reception of Christ and His free and precious salvation. *The whole need not a physician*. None would ever fly to Christ as their only refuge, were they not previously convinced of their inexpressible need of Him. Our divine  
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Joseph, at first, treats his brethren with apparent severity. He humbles with His frowns, whom He afterwards for ever exalts with His smiles; and there is reason to suspect *that* religion as spurious, which has not originated in sound conviction of the evil nature and destructive consequences of sin, producing ardent application to the divine Redeemer for deliverance from both.—Not that I would be understood as meaning, that, without peculiarly *great* convictions of these things, none can be real Christians.—No! for though the Spirit's operation be uniform in its *nature*, it is very various with regard to *circumstances* and *degrees*. But even in those who profess to have been, as they term it, *drawn* and not *driven* to Christ, sound conviction hath been produced that they were undone without Him.—After having operated as the Spirit of bondage, He next operates as

*The Spirit of adoption.* “The Spirit of adoption,” says the charming Witfius, “is the holy Spirit of God operating those things in the elect, which are suitable to, and becoming the sons of God, who love God, and are beloved by Him.” As it is by the *law* that the Spirit operates as a Spirit of bondage; so it is by the *gospel* that He operates as a Spirit of adoption. Adoption, and the *Spirit* of adoption, are very distinguishable objects. The people of God are at all times possessed of the honourable relation of the *former*, but, in a lively and sensible manner, they possess the *latter* only at certain periods and in different degrees. The essence of the Spirit of bondage is *fear*; that of the Spirit of adoption is *love*; and these alternatively  
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preponderate in the believer's mind. Sometimes the one prevails, sometimes the other.—I now proceed to consider,

II. The effect attributed in our text to the Spirit of adoption, and that is—Ability to cry, *Abba, Father*. These words are expressive of the duty of prayer; and the confidence and freedom with which the people of God perform it.

1. Of the duty of prayer:—*We cry*. This term respects not loudness of voice, but earnestness of affection. Warm and affectionate desires for the possession of those spiritual blessings which God hath graciously promised his people, are excited by this Spirit. The Spirit of adoption operates as a *Spirit of grace and supplication*. He produces a sense of the need of divine mercies; reveals the goodness and truth of the precious promises, by faith in which those mercies are conveyed; produces fervent desire; and, in the exercise of faith, and for right ends, enables the children of God to solicit the happy enjoyment of every requisite blessing for ~~body~~ body and for soul. A spirit of prayer is essential to the character of a child of God. The first breath which a regenerate soul breathes, is in prayer to God. The testimony of Jesus concerning Paul, is true of every convert—*Behold, he prayeth*, Acts ix. 11. This important duty, under the influence of the Spirit of adoption, believers are enabled to perform with,

2. Filial confidence and freedom. The terms, *Abba, Father*, import these. Both mean the same gracious relation. The former is of *Hebrew*, the latter of *Greek* origin, and may (as many

many learned men have supposed) denote, that God in Christ is equally the Father of believing Jew and Gentile; and that original distinctions are happily lost in union to Christ. Gal. iii. 28. Under the endearing character of a *Father*, the Spirit of adoption enables real Christians to approach their God, and to triumph in his love. This Spirit reveals the *excellency* of the divine *loving kindness*, Psa. xxxvi. 7. and imparts a proper and animating sense of interest therein. Thus fervent love to God is excited, prompting to zealous and evangelic obedience to His blessed will. Transporting expectation of the heavenly inheritance is also, in some happy moments, by the same divine Agent, produced. He enables the soul to "read its title clear to mansions in the skies:" And, oh! how inexpressibly delightful the prospect! What a noble support does it yield under all the afflictions and distresses of life! In these happy seasons, well may the Christian consider his afflictions light and momentary. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

To conclude; we are taught, from the divine Spirit's operating at first as a Spirit of bondage, to form, not only an apology *for*, but a justification *of*, ministerial conduct in preaching the *law* to unconverted sinners; for it is generally by this mean, that the Spirit convinces of bondage and misery, and prepares to receive the liberty and happiness of the gospel. The law, in the hand of the Spirit, becomes a school-master to bring sinners to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Gal. iii. 24. Rom. x. 4. The infinite perfection of the law, and the inviolability  
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of its obligation, become powerful means, under the divine Spirit's influence, of true conversion to God. Psa. xix. 7. The ministry of it seems equally necessary with the ploughing, &c. of a soil, in order to the advantageous reception of seed for a crop.

Again, as the above is the general method adopted by the Spirit, such who are at present under His operations as a Spirit of bondage, may assuredly conclude, that in due time they shall also be under those of his character as a Spirit of adoption. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning. They who sow in tears shall reap in joy. True joy begins not in sunshine. Follow on to know the Lord, and you *shall* know him, for his going forth is prepared, or appointed as the morning; and he will come as the former and as the latter rain upon the earth. To this man will Jehovah propitiously look, who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at his word. Let neither the number nor magnitude of your sins discourage you from expecting this. If you are convinced of both, you have reason to hope that it is in order to a happy deliverance. Wait therefore patiently on the Lord, *for it is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for his salvation, Lam. iii. 26.*

Lastly, We are informed whence originate the pleasure and acceptance of religious obedience. Both arise from the Spirit of adoption. Without this, no real delight can be enjoyed in the paths of piety, and hence so few walk in them. Nor indeed will any obedience be acceptable to  
God



God which flows not from this principle. "Our *voluntary* service He requires, not our *necessitated*. Such wish him finds no acceptance, or can find."—May you be convinced then of the absolute necessity of this Spirit; and may every believer ardently implore more and more of his gracious influence!—We, who are evil, know how to give good things to *our* children; how much more shall not our heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask? He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, will *with* him, freely give us, upon our application, the Spirit of adoption, whereby we may cry, *Abba, Father*.

In the happy possession of this Spirit, we shall find indeed wisdom's ways to be ways of pleasantness, and her paths to be paths of peace. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, in the above sense, there is *true liberty*, 2 Cor. iii. 17. He enlarges the heart, so as to *run* in the way of the divine commandments, Psa. cxix. 32. *Fear*; slavish fear, is highly unbecoming the sons of God. *Love* is the grand principle by which they should ever be ruled. Be concerned in order to enjoy more of this, to have your faith increased; exercise it continually on the great and precious promises, and shortly you will arrive where every promised good will be perfectly enjoyed, and consummate love for ever reign.

Ver. 16.

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*

**A**N additional office of the divine Spirit in the people of God is here expressed.—He beareth witness to the truth of their relation to God as His beloved children. The execution of this office, though mentioned after the act of calling upon God under the endearing character of a *Father*, seems, in the order of nature, necessarily to *precede* this calling. For who, in the proper signification of the terms, can cry, *Abba, Father*, to God, with the confidence and freedom of children, without being previously assured by the divine Spirit that God is indeed their Father? Without such assurance, this language would be the language of the grossest presumption; and yet we fear this presumption is often used; many calling God their *Father in heaven*, who possess no evidence of His being so in reality.—We cannot be more concerned than we ought, to have our religious claims properly supported. *All* deception is dangerous, but *none* is comparable to that which endangers the eternal welfare of an immortal soul.

The text necessarily supposes *two* things; *first*, that the people of God are sometimes in doubt concerning their being His children indeed. *Second*, that the divine Spirit alone can assure them that they really are.—These subjects seem justly entitled to the serious regard of the people of God; and I hope such regard will be given them.

them.—Very little time need be employed to prove the

1st supposition. Doubts concerning filiation to God, have often possessed and perplexed the minds of His people. Not one of them has been at all times free from these doubts. Those who boast of uninterrupted assurance of being the children of God, ought, I believe, to enjoy *unenvied* their imaginary attainment.—We would not, however, be understood as *pleading* for doubts. 'Tis one thing to *plead* for them, and quite another to *acknowledge* their *existence*. We utterly disclaim the doctrine of the heretical church of Rome (in whose downfall every *sincere* Christian will rejoice), that every Christian *ought* to doubt, and that it is highly presumptuous in any to pretend to assurance of being the children of God, and certain heirs of eternal life. We maintain, on the contrary, that the people of God *ought* to aspire after *full assurance of both these*. We produce instances of several who have attained this assurance; as *Job*, ch. xix. 25.—*Paul*, 2 Tim. i. 12.—*Thomas*, John xx. 28, &c. Also precepts enforcing diligence on all to attain it. See Heb. vi. 11. 2 Pet. i. 10. And affirm, that there are happy moments in which most of the people of God enjoy this assurance.—But this is not always their happy portion. “Long nights and darkness dwell below, with scarce a twinkling ray.” Too often, with Zion, they are disposed to imagine that the Lord hath forsaken and forgotten them. Isa. xlix. 14. That they have neither part nor lot in the important matter of salvation. That if they were the children of God, it would not be



be with them as it often is. These, and such like depressing apprehensions, often perplex their minds.

Various are the causes of these distressing doubts. He who scrupled not to call in question the sonship of Christ Himself, Mat. iv. 3. may reasonably be supposed ready enough to question that of His people. *Ignorance* of the genuine evidences and mode of obtaining this assurance, contributes to the same effect; some expecting, I know not what, internal vision or voice extraordinarily to reveal or tell them, as with an audible voice, that they are the children of God, pardoned and accepted through Christ Jesus. *False modesty* operates to the same end, producing a supposition that the honour of being sons and heirs of God is infinitely too exalted for such unworthy and polluted creatures as believers find themselves to be. Indeed, were this honour suspended upon human merit, we ought eternally to doubt our being the children of God; or rather, to make it no matter of doubt that we really were *not*.—But as *the adoption of children is by Jesus Christ, and according to the good pleasure of the divine will*, Eph. i. 5. and as God makes His people accepted in the Beloved to the *praise of the glory of His GRACE*, ver. 6.—'tis often *legal pride*, not *evangelic humility*, which induces such to doubt of their adoption and relation to God as His dear children. An additional cause of uncertainty respecting this prerogative, the Apostle hints, in Heb. vi. 11. to be *indolence*, the *means* of obtaining this divine blessing being ardent supplication, and impartial scrutiny into the word of God,

God, and into the heart, to discover how far they agree in what is descriptive of true grace, and consequently evidential of sonship. In the *use* of these means, this blessing is ordinarily enjoyed *under the influences* of the *divine SPIRIT*; for, according to our

2d supposition, The divine Spirit alone can infallibly assure the people of God that they are indeed His children. The SPIRIT witnesseth this, and He is the *Spirit of truth*; and they ought, and cannot but be assured of this delightful relation, who enjoy *His* testimony for it. To deny the doctrine of personal assurance of sonship to God, attested by the divine Spirit Himself, is an impious and a dangerous insult; exposing the insulter to His just resentment, the authenticity of whose testimony is presumptuously opposed. Let me beg of you, Sirs, to take great heed how you treat the offices of the divine Spirit.

It is a question of some moment, *how* the divine Spirit executes the office of witnessing to the people of God that they are His children. Some, viewing this act as expressive of a *personal testimony*, imagine that it is accomplished by *immediate suggestion* or *impression*, accompanied with a kind of *internal voice*, thus assuring certain persons that they are sons of God. To this representation, others object; deeming it enthusiastic and fallacious in the highest degree. These consider the term *witnessing*, here, as being of the same import with that in Heb. ii. 4. where we are informed, that the testimony given in favour of the great salvation of the gospel was divinely confirmed, *God bearing WITNESS both*  
*with*

with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Now, how did these signs, wonders, &c. WITNESS the truth of the gospel? Surely, not in a way of *assertion*, but as being themselves substantial *evidences* and *proofs* of it.—Thus, it is concluded, the divine Spirit witnesseth. He produceth those divine graces which are genuine evidences of sonship to God—shines upon his own work, and by calling forth into lively exercise those divine evidences, thus assures of being indeed the children of God.

With the *latter* of these sentiments I most cordially agree. I am happy to find that they have been adopted by most Christian divines; and they seem at once supported by scripture testimony, and Christian experience. The text makes mention of *two* witnesses, agreeing in one testimony;—*our spirit*, and the *Spirit of adoption*. By the former is meant, the *mind* or *conscience* of the believer; by the latter, the divine Spirit of God. Both concur to the production of the effect specified in the text. The one operates in a way of accurate examination of the state of the soul by the descriptive evidences laid down in the divine word. The other gives efficacy to these efforts, by discovering the genuine nature of those evidences, and their real existence in the believer's soul; and thus decides the litigated point, and gives a joyful issue.

The principal evidences of being the children of God are said to be, (1) Sole and entire dependence upon the atonement, righteousness, and grace of Christ, for eternal salvation, to the exclusion of every other ground of confidence. *All God's children, and none but such, are thus*

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*taught of the Lord*, Isa. liv. 13. John vi. 45.

(2) Conformity to the divine image. Every child, more or less, resembles its father. The divine holiness is described as consisting in the *love of righteousness*, and *hatred of wickedness*, Psa. xlv. 7. Of this holiness, every child of God is a partaker; and by increasing intercourse with God, increasing conformity to His image is happily experienced. (3) Sincere *love* to God, either of sensible affection, or of intense desire. If the Christian cannot with Peter confidently say, "*Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;*" he can with his whole heart and soul say, "*Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I SINCERELY DESIRE to love thee!*" This love will produce, as an additional evidence, (4) A correspondent life and conversation. The divine nature possessed by the children of God, prompts to divine conduct. And, notwithstanding the real Christian's failings and infirmities, it is his sincere *desire* and *endeavour*, to prove that the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth efficaciously to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, Titus ii. 11, 12. To the above, is added, *lastly*, Sincere *love to the brethren*, considered as such. Filial love is ever accompanied with that which is fraternal; for *every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him*, 1 John v. 1. This love is considered by the Apostle John as an evidence of having passed from death unto life, 1 John iii. 14. While by these evidences the believer's own spirit is employed in impartially examining himself, the divine Spirit's concurrence

rence is occasionally experienced, and the happy effect produced.

From what has been observed, we are taught, that assurance is not of the *essence* of faith; for were it so, there could of course be no faith where there were not assurance; and thus from the list of believers we should, perhaps, be obliged to strike off at once a very large majority. The text we have been considering, evidently supposes that believers have their doubts of being the children of God, and who will venture to contradict its supposition? Faith is the *root*, assurance is the *flower*. In the soil of a converted heart, the former always exists; but the latter is a summer production; sun and showers must call it forth. Let not, therefore, the weak in faith be discouraged. The bruised reed shall not be broken, nor shall the smoking flax be quenched.

Let me, however, exhort you, my brethren, to be very earnest in your application to the throne of grace for the happy enjoyment of this assurance. A state of suspense in a matter of such moment as that of your relation to God, must, surely, be productive of the greatest inquietude. But, not only does your own comfort materially depend upon your being assured that you are the children of God, but also your fertility and usefulness in the ways and service of your God.—You are to *follow God as his dear children, and to walk in love*; but, how can this be done without *knowing* that you are his dear children?—Without this knowledge, you cannot suitably love and obey your God and Father; or repose that unreserved and unsuspi-

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cious confidence in His tender mercy, on which in a considerable degree the divine honour and your own prosperity depends. Let me then, with the Apostle, exhort you to use the utmost diligence to acquire *the full assurance of hope to the end*, Heb. vi. 11. to make your calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. Rest not satisfied without the possession of this attainable and invaluable mercy.

Recollect the Agent from whom, and the means by which, this divine blessing is enjoyed. — Earnestly implore those divine influences which are necessary to inform your understandings concerning the genuine nature; and to excite proper self examination concerning the real possession of indubitable evidences of relation to God; and then, effectually to concur with these efforts for the production of the happy effect for which they are used. Let me caution you against an indolent enthusiastic expectation of this blessing in an extraordinary way, without the use of pious diligence and the exercise of Christian graces. *Use* means, but *depend* upon the SPIRIT alone in this important business. And ever take heed that ye grieve not the holy Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

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Ver. 17.

*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.*

**T**HE genuine character of the people of God being described, and their honourable relation to Him as his children proved, the  
Apostle



Apostle proceeds to point out the glorious *fruit* of that relation; *for if children*, saith he, *then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.*

Thus he authenticates what he had asserted, v. 13. respecting the connection subsisting between sanctifying grace and endless life. Every subject of the former is, saith he, a child of God; and, consequently, an indefeasible heir of the latter.

Our text presents *three* objects to our view. I. A necessary consequence of the filial relation of believers to God—they are *heirs; joint heirs with Christ.* II. The inheritance, to which, as such, they are entitled—*God Himself.* III. Their state previous to the complete enjoyment of their inheritance—*suffering.* They must *suffer with Christ*, before they are *glorified with Him.*—May divine grace enable us properly to consider these important objects!

I. The Apostle informs us, that believers, as a necessary consequence of their sonship to God, are *heirs;—even joint heirs with Christ.*

An *heir*, in common language, is one who succeeds to the inheritance of another after his death. Children, in general, whether natural or adopted, are heirs to their parents. The Roman law, to which it is supposed the Apostle here alludes, equally admitted males and females to this honour. By the Jewish law, the latter were excluded. In Christ, however, there is no distinction with regard to this title, but all who are children are equally heirs. Gal. iii. 28.

The validity of the Christian's title to an eternal inheritance, is suggested by his denomination of an heir. There is a *two-fold* mode of

conveying the inheritance of the saints:—by *will* or *testament*; and—by *alliance* to the Son of God. By the *former* is meant, God's irrevocable decree and free grant of grace and glory to his elect people, through the blood and death of the Lord Jesus, the great Testator, by whose death this testament is divinely confirmed. Thus we are informed, that it is the Father's GOOD PLEASURE, to GIVE *his children the kingdom*, Luke xii. 32. And being willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, they might have a strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. Through the death of Christ, a right to the heavenly inheritance is secured, and the divine promises are sealed and confirmed in Him, 2 Cor. i. 20. *for where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator*, Heb. ix. 16.

By the *latter* we are to understand that conjugal union which subsists between Christ and his people, by virtue of which they become joint heirs with Him. He is possessed of power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as in the covenant of redemption were given to Him, John xvii. 2. And real believers, by virtue of not only a *relative* but a *real* union to Him, as their head, shall, *because He lives, live also*, John xiv. 19 and be with Him where He is, for ever to behold His glory, John xvii. 24.

Thus believers possess a free, sure, and honourable title to an everlasting inheritance. In this life they are in a state of *minority*, and consequently heirs *only*; not *possessors*. However, a suffi-

sufficient maintenance is allowed them out of their divine estate. They are divinely taught, preserved, and supplied with every requisite to render their present deportment suitable to their future prefeiment. At *death*, they are pronounced of full age, and take complete possession of their divine portion.

Though there be, in some instances, an evident *analogy* between a temporal and a spiritual heir; yet there are also others of the greatest *disparity*. Amongst men, only the *first-born* can succeed to the inheritance; but real Christians constitute a *church of first-born*, where all are equally heirs. A temporal heir cannot enjoy an inheritance before the death of his *father*; a spiritual heir cannot before his *own*: God has *heirs*, but no *successors*. An earthly inheritance is lessened by the number of *co-heirs*; not so the heavenly. As the light of the sun is enjoyed by every individual as much as if he alone existed, so is it with regard to the felicity of heaven. Again; the greatest *uncertainty* attends the reception and possession of an earthly inheritance: Death may intervene and prevent the reception; or, will at last arrive and prevent the continued possession of it. But no such uncertainty attends the real Christian's enjoyment of his inheritance. Death, which eternally ruins others, puts him in immediate and everlasting possession of eternal felicity. Happy the people who are in such a case! And still more obvious will their happiness appear, by a serious consideration of,

II. The inheritance to which, as heirs, they are entitled. They are—*heirs of God!* The



lines are fallen to them in pleasant places indeed! they have a goodly heritage; the Lord Himself being the portion of their inheritance! Psa. xvi.

There are various objects of which real Christians are said to be heirs. They are heirs of *promise*, Heb. vi. 17.—of *righteousness*, Heb. xi. 7.—of *salvation*, Heb. ii. 14.—of the *grace of life*, 1 Pet. iii. 7.—of the *kingdom*, James ii. 5.—of the *world*, Rom. iv. 13.—and here, *heirs of God*. All these may be arranged under three heads—temporal,—spiritual,—and eternal blessings; the last of which are comprised in the full enjoyment of God for ever.

1. *Temporal* blessings. *They shall inherit the earth*, Mat. v. 5. Though in general they possess but little of it, yet they have a *covenant right* to that which they do possess; and this renders a little that a righteous man hath, better than the riches of many wicked, Psa. xxxvii. 16. He who feeds the fowls of the air, and adorns the lilies of the field, will supply all the need of his own children, Phil. iv. 19.

2. *Spiritual* blessings. These are the *sure mercies of David*, Psa. lv. 3. *Pardon*, full and free, of all trespasses. *Justification*, or the gracious acceptance of their persons to eternal favour. *Peace* with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. *Access* to God in every time of need, as a reconciled Father. *Growth in grace*, their shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. The *ministry of angels*; for are they not all ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation? Heb. ii. 14. *Invincible perseverance* in faith and holiness. *Support in death*. *Certain reception*

*reception to eternal life at last.* And, to crown and complete all, they are,

3. *Heirs of God.* *Heirs of God!*—Astonishing expression! O! what presumption would it have been for polluted worms to have *thought* of such a title, much more to have *hoped* ever to *enjoy* it, had not God himself revealed, and from the infinite riches of his grace imparted it to his people through his dear Son's life and death! Great, stupendously great, as this honour is, it is not *too* great for the infinite riches of divine grace to bestow.

My brethren, you well know the impossibility of doing this grand subject justice; and I persuade myself you will candidly accept, on the present occasion, the will for the deed. After our sublimest conceptions of God, and the felicity of his people in the perfect enjoyment of Him, we must exclaim,—*how little a portion is heard of Him!* Job xxvi. 14. To have the ever-blessed God Himself, the fountain of infinite happiness, for our portion and exceeding great reward!—How does the consideration distend human thought, and overwhelm it with amazement! I WILL BE THEIR GOD, is His gracious language with regard to His people; and hath He said and shall He not do it, or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good? Impossible! He is not ashamed to be called their God, and hath provided for them a heavenly city, where they shall be presented before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. If the Queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, that stand continually be-

fore thee, and hear thy wisdom!"—how much more happy shall they be who shall for ever stand before God and see His glory? In His presence is fulness of joy, at His right hand are pleasures for evermore! The children of God shall behold His face in righteousness, and be satisfied with His likeness for ever and ever! O inconceivable happiness! well dost thou justify the infinite grace of God in thy bestowment; and the ardour and diligence of real Christians to enjoy thee as their infinite prize, Phil. iii. 14.—But we proceed to consider,

III. The state and condition of these heirs while in this life, previous to the complete possession of their inheritance.—It is a state of *trial* or *suffering*. They must *suffer* with Christ, before they are *glorified* with Him. "The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father."

It appears to be the unalterable will and purpose of God, blessed for ever, to bring his people to endless life and glory through sufferings. This is positively asserted in scripture. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, Psa. xxxiv. 19. In the world they shall have tribulation, John xvi. 33. We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven, Acts xiv. 22. We are appointed to afflictions, 1 Thes. iii. 3. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth, Heb. xii. 6. Fiery trials are no strange things to the people of God, 1 Pet. iv. 12. Through fire and through water does He bring his people to Heaven's wealthy place, Psa. lxvi. 12.

And



And those in glory are described as having come out of great tribulation, Rev. vii. 14.

The subjection of the people of God to sufferings, appears to originate solely in divine sovereignty. There certainly is no *natural* necessity for them. To the illimitable power of God no difficulty could occur in instantaneously metamorphosing his people to that glory and blessedness, both of body and soul, which they shall enjoy in the resurrection. But God, as a "God of order," in bringing his many sons unto glory, hath been pleased to adopt a certain plan, according to which there is a *moral* *needs-be* for heaviness through manifold temptations. As the head was, so the members must be perfected through sufferings, Heb. ii. 10.

The moral advantages arising from sanctified afflictions are many and great. In general, this is their final fruit—the taking away of sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. That great branch of sanctification consisting in the mortifying of sin, seems to be considerably promoted by them. They humble the heart; wean from the world; excite earnest prayer; prevent many sins; and occasion the exercise of many graces. On these, and on similar accounts, good men have gratefully acknowledged it to have been good for them to have been afflicted.

Let us here inquire into the import of—*suffering with Christ*;—and for what reason the Apostle informs us that believers must thus suffer, previous to their being glorified with Him.

To *suffer with Christ*, seems plainly to intimate that union which subsists between Him and his people; by virtue of which they may be said

to suffer with Him, 1. Because of His *sympathy* with them under all their sufferings. We have *not* such an high priest as *cannot* be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Accordingly, when Saul persecuted the members on earth, the Head cried out from Heaven, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Acts ix. 4. And, 2. because of His *gracious presence* with His people in afflictions. He hath promised to be with them in trouble, Psa. xci. 15. When passing through waters, and rivers, and fires of affliction, *I will be with thee* is His gracious language, Isa. xliii. 2. The fiery furnace into which the three Hebrew heroes were cast, injured them not, nor so much as singed a hair of their heads, because of the presence of a divine deliverer, Dan. iii. 20—25. And our blessed Jesus will be with His people alway, even to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20.

With regard to the Apostle's design in the information he here imparts concerning previous sufferings, 'tis evidently to support and encourage the people of God under them. For this purpose he informs them—that afflictions are the common lot of all God's people, and the forerunners of eternal blessedness.—That the way of the cross has ever since man's fall been the sure road to the crown. "For if we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with Him." "To him that overcometh," saith He, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21. Let the Christian therefore look with divine encouragement to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith; and  
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run patiently the Christian race, animated by the joy that is set before him, Heb. xii. 2.

Before I conclude, permit me to remind you that heaven is the portion of *children* only. Without this character in vain do you hope for this portion. You must be begotten again before you can possess a lively and a well-founded hope of an everlasting inheritance, 1 Pet. i. 3. Let me beg of you impartially to examine yourselves on this important subject, and, as ever you would escape the misery of a disappointed hope of heaven, cease not ardently to beseech God to make you of the happy number of his children.—Sure I am, that a period will commence when all men will desire this honour. May you be concerned to enjoy it in the accepted time and day of salvation, and pray for it in a time when God may be found! Psa. xxxii. 6.

Let none be discouraged from the account given of the afflictions and trials of real Christians previous to the possession of their heavenly inheritance. One moment's enjoyment of heaven will amply compensate for every cross endured in the way thither. Afflicted godliness terminating in eternal felicity, is infinitely preferable to all the charms of prosperous wickedness ending in hell. Men of the world have their portion in this life. Psa. xvii. 14. The children of God have theirs in that which is to come. *Here*, the former have their good things, and afterwards are tormented for ever; the latter have here their evil things, and shall hereafter be eternally comforted, Luke xvi. 26. As superior as God and eternity are to time and the creature,  
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is the Christian's portion to that of the worldling.—To hesitate a choice in *such* a competition, is folly in the extreme. You must be convinced of the superiority of the one of these portions to the other.—May you be enabled to act according to your own convictions!

You who are dignified with the honourable title of being heirs of God, earnestly pray for those divine influences which are requisite to enable you to form a just estimate, and to make a pious use, of this exalted privilege. In the possession of it, you are entitled to strong consolation; and the magnitude of the hopes it inspires should awaken ardent desire for that purity which is absolutely necessary for the enjoyment of the great object of them, 1 John iii. 3. By patient continuance in well-doing, press forward to your prize of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. To all your losses and trials in this life, contrast your blessed portion in that which is to come, as a noble expedient for cheerful acquiescence under the most frowning dispensations of Providence. Heb. x. 34. And O! live daily in the exercise of grateful astonishment at the riches of that grace which hath bestowed such honour and happiness upon you!

Ver. 18.

*For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

HAVING affirmed, in the preceding verse, that believers must suffer with Christ, previous to their glorification with him, the Apostle proceeds to the production of various motives to excite patience and peaceful submission to the will of God under sufferings.—Believers *have need of patience*, Heb. xii. 36.

The first motive urged for this purpose, is taken from the vast disproportion subsisting between present sufferings and future glory. The Apostle holds up a balance in which both these are impartially weighed. *Tekel, wanting*, is found written on the one, while the other rests on the basis of a decided preference.

The text contains, you may perceive,

I. A *contrast* between the sufferings of this present time, and the glory which shall be revealed in believers.

II. A *deliberate decision* concerning the superiority of the latter of these to the former, not being worthy to be compared together.

The obvious design of these words, appears to be,—the encouragement and consolation of the suffering followers of Christ.—God grant this design may be accomplished in our consideration of them!

I. A *contrast*, &c. Let us consider the objects contrasted. 1. *The sufferings of this present*

*sent time.* Those of the apostolic age are supposed to be here implied. In the Apostles, and their contemporaries, the sufferings of Christ singularly abounded, 2 Cor. i. 5. In them, the terms of admission into the family of Christ,—*self-denial and taking up the cross*, were eminently exemplified.

But, there appears no just authority for prescribing to the terms of our text such narrow limits as the apostolic age. The terms, doubtless, denote time in general, and every successive period of it in particular, till the whole is absorbed in vast eternity. The period of the believer's continuance in this life is all that is allotted to him for the enduring of sufferings. *Here* he has his appointed portion of evil things, Luke xvi. 25. but here *only*; for, O how great is the goodness which God hath laid up for him to be enjoyed for ever hereafter! Psa. xxxi. 19. God's people mourn now, but shall hereafter be for ever comforted, Mat. v. 4.

We have before proved that the cross must be endured before the crown of righteousness is received. Considering the *character* of the *world* in which believers dwell; the *state* of their *souls*; the *constitution* of their *bodies*; together with their *numerous* and *powerful enemies*; sufferings appear absolutely unavoidable. The *first* of these is as barren of materials for *mental enjoyments* (which only are relished by real Christians) as the inhospitable deserts of *Arabia*, or the valley of *Baca*, were of materials for those which were sensitive to the Israelites. 'Tis a wilderness full of noisome vapours, poisonous reptiles, and beasts of prey. In the *second*, the  
remains



remains of sin—a fruitful source of sorrow! still reside. These sometimes oppress the Christian as an heavy burden, too heavy for him to bear. The *third* is a crazy machine, whose wheels are often clogged with sickness. An *earthly house*, often out of repair, a miserable clog to the immortal inhabitant; so infected with the leprosy of sin, that nothing short of its total demolition will entirely eradicate the foul disorder. From the *last*, almost perpetual alarms and disquietudes are given. Sin, Satan, and the world, are formidable enemies, and require the possession of the *whole armour of God* successfully to resist them. The Christian's negligence of using this armour, occasions the infliction of many painful wounds. To the sufferings arising from these sources the Apostle contrasts,

2. *The glory which shall be revealed.* The happy termination and fruit of true godliness will amply compensate for every degree of difficulty and opposition attending the present practice of it.

The future felicity of believers is here described under the appellation of *glory*; it is supposed, that this glory is at present *concealed*; but, that a period will arrive when it will be *fully displayed*; and, to true believers, displayed in a very interesting manner, not only *to* them, but *in* them.—Each of these particulars deserves our notice.

To impart some proper, though feeble conceptions of the magnitude of the happiness reserved for the people of God in a future world, various expressive images are borrowed from the present, for the purpose of illustration. 'Tis a  
*Paradise,*

*Paradise*, 2 Cor. xii. 4. containing founts, and trees of life, "flowery mounts," and amaranthine bowers, where songs of eternal praise resound to the great Father of Lights and Fountain of happiness.—*A Kingdom*, Luke xii. 32. where the happy subjects in sweetest concord enjoy the fruits of the infinite wisdom, love, and beneficence of their heavenly King.—*A City*, Heb. xi. 16. of eternal security, where, united in social bonds; the blessed citizens dwell together, enjoying the immediate presence of their God. There, the nations of them who are saved, walk with him, "high in salvation." In those "climes of bliss," there shall be no death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain; for all these things are passed away for ever, Rev. xxi. 4. 'Tis an *inheritance*, 1 Pet. i. 4. incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. *A Rest*, Heb. iv. 9. "from the turbulence of passion, the vanity of pursuit, the vexation of disappointment." 'Tis *Life*, eternal life, Rom. vi. 23. consisting in full possession of divine favour, Psa. xxx. 5. and complete conformity to the divine image. In our text 'tis called *Glory*; and elsewhere, *a Crown of Glory*. The imperfect discoveries of the divine glory with which good men have been indulged in this life; were found to be possessed of transforming efficacy upon the mind, 2 Cor. iii. 18. and even on the *body*, as in the case of Moses, Exod. xxxiv. 29. To what glory then shall both be restored when the blessed and glorious God is seen through a Redeemer, *face to face*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. and the noon-tide rays of his glory dart immediately upon the objects of his favour!—*Then shall the righteous*

*righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, Mat. xiii. 43.*

But, after attending to the clearest descriptions, and the most expressive images, we are constrained to acknowledge that the glorious happiness reserved for the people of God is still enveloped in great obscurity;—*it doth not yet clearly appear what we shall be, only we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is,* 1 John iii. 2. At present we see through a glass darkly, and walk by faith, not by sight.

The glory appointed for real believers, is, however, ready to be revealed in the last time, 1 Pet. i. 5. being prepared for them from before the foundation of the world, Mat. xxv. 34. When Christ, the life of his people, shall appear, then shall they also appear with Him in glory, Col. iii. 4. and be presented before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, Jude 24. “Lo, this is our God!” shall they triumphantly cry, “we have waited for Him; He hath saved us; this is the Lord, we have waited for Him; we will be glad, and” for ever “rejoice in his salvation,” Isa. xxv. 9.

This glory shall be revealed, not only to the real Christian, when he shall see his Redeemer, *as He is*; nor will it be only *upon* him, when fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body; but it is affirmed that it shall be revealed *in* him; meaning, perhaps, the perfect renovation of the soul in *knowledge and holiness*. It will be an *internal*, a *mental* glory. Christ now possesses the hearts of his people, and at His *second* coming will be admired *in* all them that believe, filling  
heaven



heaven with astonishment at the great transformation effected by his recovering grace in children of wrath and heirs of hell.—We proceed now to consider,

II. The Apostle's deliberate decision concerning the superiority of the one of these contrasted objects to the other. The term, "reckon," employed by the Apostle in this decision, alludes, either to an *arithmetician*, who, upon examining his accounts, finds the sum total of one, far to exceed that of another; or to a *logician*, who, accurately pondering his premises, deduces with confidence his final conclusion.

Perfectly qualified was our Apostle to form this decision. He was thoroughly tutored in the school of adversity; and almost every species of it, he had, one time or another, endured. Affecting is the account which he gives of his sufferings in the 11th chapter of 2 Corinthians — Nor was he unacquainted with the greatness of the happiness reserved for the people of God. To the abundant consolation which he occasionally enjoyed in Christ, was superadded his temporary abode in the third heavens, where he heard and saw unutterable joys.—Great deference, on these subjects, must hence be due to the decision of such a judge.

The formation of contrasts between present and future good and evil, has been found productive of preservation from the seducing objects of sense, and of fortitude under such as were alarming. Thus *Moses*, in prospect of future felicity, preferred the suffering of afflictions and reproaches with the people of God, to the possession of the treasures and honours of the

the court of Egypt, Heb. xi. 24—26. The believing Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had enduring substance in heaven, Heb. x. 34. And our blessed Lord teaches us to conquer the fear of *man*, who can only destroy the body, by fearing HIM who is able to destroy for ever body and soul in hell, Mat. x. 28.

Present sufferings, according to the doctrine of our text, bear no proportion to future glory, the latter infinitely transcending the former. Present sufferings are administered, generally, by the mediation of *man*, a feeble instrument!—future glory, immediately by GOD, who Himself wipes away all tears, and confers consummate blessedness. The former are *light*; light compared with what we deserve, with what Christ endured, and with what the damned suffer in hell; the latter is a *weight*, 2 Cor. iv. 18. a *massy* blessedness, requiring the enlarged and invigorated powers and faculties of glorified bodies and souls to sustain. Our present powers of enjoyment are blunt, compared with that infinite delicacy with which they shall be endowed when perfectly conformed to the divine image. Present sufferings are *transient* in their duration; *but for a moment*. Future glory is *eternal*. The Christian's crown of it fadeth not away.—Take what view you will of the contrasted objects, whether their nature, degree, or duration, their disproportion is literally infinite.

The doctrine which we have considered, reflects the greatest disgrace on the sons of sensuality, who “inter celestial hopes without a sigh,” and, for the transitory pleasures of sin,  
risk

risk the intolerable torments of hell for ever. O! Sirs, what awful infatuation must have seized you, to lose your souls for the trifles of this world, when at death you must with your souls lose those trifles also!—May divine grace prevent you any longer *spending your money for that which is not bread*, and enable you to *lay hold on eternal life* presented in Christ Jesus.

The grandeur and greatness of eternal bliss, fully justifies the Christian's choice of that better part. He is often secretly despised at present as being deficient in taste for supposed elegant enjoyments. But, hereafter, his wisdom, and purity of true taste, will be fully manifested from the nature and duration of those enjoyments to which he here gave the preference.

Our doctrine affords the greatest encouragement and support to suffering followers of Christ. As sure as you suffer with Him, with Him also shall you reign. And what are all your present sufferings when compared with the happiness reserved for you?—They vanish; eternal glory almost annihilates them.—Could a famous Carthaginian general, from the summit of the Alps, inspire his soldiers with almost supernatural courage by the prospect of the fertile *plains of Italy*, and the precarious hope of the future possession of them; and shall the noble prospects, and certain hopes, which true faith presents and produces of the eternal enjoyment of the paradise of God, be found *less* efficacious to man the Christian's heart with courage to encounter danger, and with fortitude to support pain?—Forbid it, gracious God! and strengthen us with thy might in the inner man,  
unto



unto all long-suffering with joyfulness, in hope of eternal life, which THOU, who canst not lie, hast promised before the world began, Col. i. 11. Tit. i. 2.

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Ver. 19—22.

*For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

THE Apostle Peter observes, concerning the writings of his beloved brother Paul, that there are in them *some things hard to be understood*, 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16. I know not any part of Paul's writings to which this remark is more applicable than to our text. It is the most difficult to be understood, and perhaps the least interesting, of any in this whole chapter; for which reason, and also because of the connexion of its respective parts to each other, it appeared most proper to present, as comprehensively as possible, our observations at once on the subjects which our text presents.

A recital of the different sentiments of good men upon our text would be an employment as tedious as unfruitful. If in the multitude of counsellors there is *safety*, there is also often much *perplexity*. We should ever be ready to acknowledge, with suitable gratitude, our obligations

gations for the learned and pious labours of good men; but were we implicitly to embrace every sentiment which they advance on religious subjects, we should materially obstruct the improvement of our own understandings, and pay those good men a compliment for which they would not thank us.—The result of my own, and of the reflections of others (as far as they appeared proper), on the text, I now submit to your consideration with a degree of diffidence which, on the present occasion, seems proper to be indulged.

The particular design of the Apostle, in these words, appears to be—the magnifying of the glory to be revealed. For this purpose, he represents, in a bold rhetorical figure, the whole creation as ardently expecting the revelation of that glory, in hope of participating it. Thus he carries on his general design of encouraging the suffering people of God to exercise patience and peaceful submission to the divine will, from the prospect of the greatness of their future happiness.

In some versions the words of our text are *thus* arranged. *The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God; in hope that (oti) the creature itself also shall, &c.* and so include the 20th verse, excepting the words—in hope, in a parenthesis. This reading is certainly more smooth and intelligible, and the sacred original will admit this order.—Whether this, or the order we have in our common translations, be admitted, the principal objects presented to our notice in the text seem to be,

I. The

I. The *present* state of creation in general.—It is a state of *involuntary subjection to vanity, groaning and travailing in pain under the bondage of corruption.*

II. The *future* deliverance and restoration which it expects—for the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

III. The ardour with which, metaphorically, it desires and expects its deliverance—for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

May it please God to render our observations on these subjects edifying!

I. We consider the *present* state of creation, &c. The term rendered *creature* is the same which, in the 22d verse, is rendered *creation*; and this is the primary, and indeed the most proper signification of the term. Some apply this term, and the whole of the text, to the *gentile* world; but I believe, with the continuators of Mr. Henry, that “this is an exposition very foreign and forced.” Rather the whole visible creation seems to be here intended.

The vanity to which creation is now subjected, seems to imply, 1. A *deviation* from its original ends. These seem to have been *two-fold*—*Natural*, for the furnishing of man with every requisite for safe and happy life; and *moral*, for the advancement of the divine glory, every creature serving as a step by which to ascend to the ever-blessed God, in the exercise of pious affections. But now, alas! both these ends are greatly perverted.

H

“The



“The whole frame, even of material nature,” says a sensible writer, “deviated into disorder, from the moment Adam sinned. The elements acquired a propensity to hurt, unknown before. The *earth* teemed with thorns, and refused to supply its fallen master with food convenient for him, but on condition of labour and toil. *Water* and *fire*, though, in themselves, two of the most important sublunary gifts, received, nevertheless, a power to injure and destroy. The very *air* we breathe is, frequently, the region of disease, and the vehicle of death.”

As the *natural*, so the *moral* purposes of creation are lamentably perverted. The supreme regard due to the CREATOR is transferred by idolatry to the *creature*, Rom. i. 25. And, instead of tracing, with gratitude and praise, the stream of the blessings and glories of creation to their overflowing Source, they are, alas! abused for the infamous purposes of administering fuel to pride, and every species of luxury and intemperance.—There proceeds,

2. A *vainly consequential* on this perversion, whereby men are for ever disappointed in their efforts to find satisfaction in the creature; walking in a vain show, and disquieting themselves in vain, in the pursuit of happiness in sensual pleasures, riches, and honours. These are altogether unsuitable to the nature and duration of the soul of man as a spiritual and immortal being; and hence, with equal success, he might attempt to satisfy hunger with a poetic description, or heal a wound with a demonstration from Euclid, as to find solid satisfaction in them.

Oppressed

Oppressed thus, under the bondage of man's corruption, and its own liability to decay and death, the creature is represented as *groaning* and *travailing* in pain. The former of these terms is taken from a man laden with a burden exceeding his strength to bear; the latter from a woman in the pangs of delivery; and both express the extreme misery brought upon the whole creation by the sin of man.

I say—*by the sin of man*; for the subjection of the creature to vanity (according to the figurative representation of the text) was *involuntary*; being contrary to its primitive principles and tendencies. Adam was the *meritorious*, and God the *judicial* cause of this subjection. By the just judgment of the latter, a curse was pronounced on creation for the sin of the former.—Let us now consider,

II. The *future* deliverance and restoration expected by the creature. *For the creature itself, also, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* That is, according to some, the creatures in their *kind*, and according to their *capacity*, shall enjoy, when restored to their paradisaical state, a liberty and happiness as suitable to their natures as those of the people of God are to them.

The diversity of sentiment concerning this deliverance is great, and appears more likely to confuse than inform the mind. I candidly acknowledge; that, at present, I feel a bias in favour of those (and they are not a few), who, on the authority of the text, and some other parts of scripture, believe it to be very probable

that creation in general will be restored to the state and condition in which it was previous to the fall of man. With men, creation may be said to have fallen; and, perhaps, with those of the sons of men who shall be restored, creation also shall. We do not pretend to possess ability, either of producing indisputable evidence of this, or of answering all the questions which a petulant or a proper curiosity may propose. We only advance it as a *probable* supposition, and the most probable which the text will apparently bear.

It is very generally supposed, that the final conflagration will not *annihilate*, but, as a purifying fire, *refine* the world. *The heavens indeed shall be on fire and dissolved; nevertheless, saith Peter, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13.* These new heavens and earth, doubtless, will not exist in vain. If not, they will consequently be inhabited, according to Isa. xlv. 18. And if inhabited, surely by every corresponding order of being, and earth be again replenished from the great roots of mineral, vegetable, and animal creation. The perpetuity of the people and covenant of divine grace is compared to that of the ordinances of heaven and earth, Jer. xxxi. 35—37. but, God forbid that we should charge the Holy Spirit with using improper comparisons. If this is not one, the permanency of the one of the compared objects seems equal to that of the other. But what! are neither to last longer than till Christ's second coming? Who will ever admit this? Surely very few. Would the Psalmist, think  
you,



you, exhort *the heavens to rejoice, and the earth to be glad, before the Lord, on the account of his coming to judge the earth and the world in righteousness*, if then heaven and earth are to be entirely destroyed? Psa. xcvi. 11—13. This surely would be no matter of joy to them. The bodies of the saints at the resurrection will indeed be changed, but not in their *essence*, for then they would cease to be bodies; but in their *qualities* only. They will consequently remain *material*, and require the existence of material objects suited to their glorified senses. The pleasing variety of universal nature, when restored to its primitive excellency and beauty, will surely be as suitable to the glorified bodies of the saints, as it was to Adam previous to the fall.

We are informed, in the 104th Psalm and the 31st verse, that *The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever; and that the Lord shall rejoice in his works*. 'Tis obvious, from the subject and tenor of the whole Psalm, that the works of creation, and the glory thence arising, are here intended. But how can this glory endure for ever, and the Lord rejoice in these works, if a total destruction of them is to take place? You will observe, that it is not said, the Lord *hath* rejoiced, but *will* rejoice in his works. Soon, very soon, after creation, sin entered and defaced its glory. God is represented, not only as *repenting* for having made man, but as *grieved at heart* for having made the rest of the creatures, Gen. vi. 6, 7. Does it not then appear difficult to do justice to the Psalmist's observations without admitting the restoration of creation to the glorious state which it possessed.

before the fall?—From these observations, the probability, at least, of this doctrine has been admitted by many; and, in particular, I have done little more than presented you with the remarks of the judicious *Charnock* in the beginning of his Discourse on the Immutability of God. What has been offered, I presume you will think quite sufficient on what some will consider as a mere speculation. We therefore proceed to consider,

III. The ardour with which the creature, metaphorically, desires and expects its future deliverance. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, in hope that, &c.*

Here it seems proper to observe, that, at Christ's second coming, there will be a manifestation of the sons of God, and a glorious liberty enjoyed.

1. The sons of God will be manifested at Christ's second coming. At present their *persons, principles, and privileges*, are very little known. *The world knoweth us not*, saith St. John, *because it knew Him not*, 1 John iii. 1. Believers are God's *hidden ones*, Psa. lxxxiii. 3. hidden from a blind undiscerning world; but hereafter they will be fully discovered, so that men shall clearly *discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not*, Mal. iii. 18.

Equally obscure are the divine *principles* by which real Christians are actuated. Extremely erroneous conceptions have often been formed of their principles, and those of the basest description, by malignant censure, attributed to them.

them. Their spiritual life, in its origin, supplies, and operations, is *hid with Christ in God*, Col. iii. 3. But *when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they* and their genuine principles *appear also*; and, to the confusion of every accuser of the brethren, it will appear that they were as pure as permanent.

O! how great and glorious will their privileges also then appear, when the great Judge shall own them as his peculiar property, and dear children; and receive them to infinite happiness appointed and prepared for them from before the foundation of the world! Then shall they perfectly enjoy,

2. *A glorious liberty.* This liberty is now begun. Through divine grace believers are delivered from the guilt and dominion of sin, from the power of Satan and of the world. In gospel ordinances they have liberty of access to God, and occasionally enjoy happy communion with Him. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*, 2 Cor. iii. 17. and frequently does he condescend to visit the real Christian's heart, shedding abroad a sense of divine love, Rom. v. 5. thus enlarging it, and enabling the Christian to *run* in the way of the divine commands, Psa. cxix. 32.

But the enjoyment of perfect liberty is reserved to the future state. Then indeed will liberty from all sins, sorrows, afflictions, temptations, doubts and fears, be fully possessed, and every good perfectly enjoyed. To this liberty the soul is admitted at death, and the body shall partake of it at the resurrection. The body then shall be liberated for ever from the dominion



of death and the grave, and possess a *glorious* liberty, being completely changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body.

For this happy period the creature is ardently longing, in hope of participating, according to its nature and capacity, the liberty then bestowed. The original terms are very forcible and expressive; importing a stretching forth of the neck, in the act of eager looking for, and desiring the arrival of, a distant approaching object. Thus the creature, figuratively, expects with peculiar ardour its approaching deliverance. This ardour is expressive of the extreme misery of its present condition; and the greatness of its future deliverance.

The subject we have attempted to discuss is calculated to impress us with a sense of the evil nature and destructive consequences of sin. Not only has it defaced the image of God in man, and stamped Satan's in its stead, but hath introduced confusion into the whole creation, and entailed misery on every being capable of it. Canst thou consider this, O man! and forbear lamenting thy own sinfulness, and pitying the innocent animals who suffer for thine offence? Surely thy heart must be petrified, if thou canst; and inexpressible must your need be of *a new heart and a right spirit*. O! cry earnestly to God for these blessings, and rest not satisfied without them, that iniquity may not prove your ruin.

The vanity to which creation is now subjected, makes it folly in man to attempt to find satisfaction in creatures. Concerning true happiness, each of them cries, "It is not in me."

Unfanc-

Unsanctified fancy gives an excellency to the creature which it possesses not in reality. Hence the endless disappointments of men. If they attain not the object of their pursuits, they are *then* disappointed; if they do attain it, they are disappointed still, because they have not those *degrees* of enjoyment which they promised themselves. So many ingredients are requisite to medicate the cup of human enjoyment, that if but *one* be wanting, the whole composition is spoiled: For such and so great are the corruption and perversity of human nature, that one absent comfort will be often found sufficient to draw away the attention from every other in possession. Thus men *disquiet themselves in vain*, by spending money for that which is not bread, and their labour for what satisfieth not.

Let me therefore exhort you, my friends, to implore the grace of God to enable you to distinguish between things that differ, and to approve such as are truly excellent: *Now* to make that choice of the better part, which all men will one day wish to have made. Think of the insufficiency of all worldly objects to support and comfort you, in the solemn moments of dissolution; and O! direct your principal regard to such as will. What are these but union to Christ; consequent pardon and acceptance in His precious blood and all-perfect righteousness; together with a good hope, through grace, of the joys of heaven? From these fountains flow the streams of true peace, purity, and joyful confidence. For these truly divine blessings may you earnestly pray to God in a time when He may be found! Psa. xxxii. 6.

As the future happiness of God's people is so infinitely great as to interest all nature, and awaken ardent desire in the creature to partake thereof according to its capacity; surely the people of God themselves ought to be suitably affected with their reversionary inheritance, looking forward to it with triumph, and in hope of possessing it for ever, to rejoice. Shall *the creature itself* earnestly expect the manifestation of the sons of God, and the sons of God themselves be indifferent concerning it? Surely the impropriety of this must affect every thinking mind with a degree of penitential sorrow. O! what a proof is it of much remaining carnality, that we are so little affected with the infinite joys of a blissful immortality! May a gracious God pardon and remove this evil!

Let me intreat you, my brethren, to make that use of the subject which it appears the Apostle intended you should. It was obviously to encourage and support you under your present sufferings by the infinite greatness of the happiness you shall shortly enjoy. Be not therefore weary in well-doing. In due season you shall reap if you faint not. Be patient unto the coming of the Lord, and be looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ. Be seriously concerned to possess well-grounded evidence of being the children of God, and consequently sure heirs of an immortal inheritance. God's people are a chosen and redeemed people; and, in consequence thereof, they are caused to choose God as their only portion; and to depend alone upon the blood of Christ for free pardon. The  
sincerity



sincerity of this choice, and of this dependence, is evidenced by that sanctifying influence with which they are accompanied. May you richly enjoy these evidences, and, in the comfortable possession of them, lift up your heads with joy, for your complete redemption draweth nigh!

“ The Saviour then will us receive,  
Transported from this vale to live,  
And reign with Him above;  
Where faith is sweetly lost in sight,  
And hope in full supreme delight,  
And everlasting love.”

Ver. 23.

*And not only they, but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.*

THE unhappy consequences of the introduction of sin into the world, we are here taught, affect, not only the creature, as already described, but extend to the people of God themselves. Remaining depravity and imperfection causes them to draw sigh for sigh with the creature, and groan for complete deliverance.

In the text, believers are described as possessors of the first fruits of the Spirit; and certain consequences of these fruits are specified. These are, sorrowful depression under the weight of numerous natural and sinful infirmities; and a humble waiting for future *complete* deliverance. This deliverance is called *the adoption*, and is explained to consist in *the redemption of the body*; that is, its resurrection and re-union to the soul;

at which period both will be for ever happy in the perfect enjoyment of God.

Hoping to enjoy divine aid, I shall offer a few reflections on each of these subjects. We shall first observe the description given of true believers; and then particularly consider the object for which they are represented as waiting.

I. True believers are described as possessing *the first fruits* of the Spirit. Here we shall inquire, *What* these fruits are; and *why* so called.

By the *fruits of the Spirit* here, we are, in general, to understand His sanctifying, sealing, and comforting influences. The Apostle seems to allude to an Old Testament ordinance, in which it was appointed to begin the harvest with a solemn dedication of its first fruits to God, in humble acknowledgment of his providential goodness, and as an earnest and pledge of their safe reception of the whole harvest. Exod. xxii. 29. and xxiii. 19.

The ingenious Dr. Watts, in his Treatise on the World to come, observes, that "The first fruits of any field, or plant, or tree, are of the *same kind* with the full product, or harvest. Therefore it is plain, that the first fruits of the Spirit, in this place, cannot chiefly signify the *gifts* of the Spirit, such as the gifts of healing, or of miracles, nor the gifts of prophecy, preaching, or praying, because these are not the employments, nor the enjoyments, of heaven. The *first fruits of the Spirit* must rather refer therefore to the knowledge and holiness, the grace and the joys, which are more perfect and glorious in the heavenly state, than they were ever designed to be here on earth."

Our

Our principal ideas of heaven being those of *holiness* and *happiness*; the first fruits of it seem necessarily to import the *graces* and *comforts* of the divine Spirit.

1. The *graces* of the divine Spirit. By these we are to understand the divine habits which He produces in the souls of God's people, and which are enumerated by the Apostle, Gal. v. 22, 23. There, and in Ephes. v. 9. these habits are expressly called the *fruit of the Spirit*. *Gifts* mean, in general, extraordinary ability of using *natural* powers. *Grace* implies the possession of a degree of conformity to the *moral* image of God in *righteousness* and *true holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. The *former* may be possessed in eminent degrees without a grain of true holiness; the essence of the *latter* consists in holiness. Grace, thus described, is absolutely necessary to qualify for the enjoyment of heaven. Grace and glory are *inseparably* linked together in the golden chain of salvation, Psa. lxxxiv. 11. Without holiness, no man shall the Lord; this being the prerogative of the pure in heart alone, Heb. xii. 14. Mat. v. 8. To the *graces*, we must add,

2. The *comforts* of the divine Spirit; as the other part of those first fruits which are enjoyed by believers in the present state. The Holy Ghost is called the COMFORTER, John xiv. 16. 26.; nor does he bear that title in vain. It is His gracious office to bear witness to the truth of the believer's relation to God as a son, and consequently as an heir of God through Christ. As such, the divine Spirit enables him to read his title clear to mansions in the skies, and to rejoice



rejoice in hope of the glory of God. He glorifies Jesus by revealing His personal dignity as God over all, blessed for ever; together with the suitability, fulness, and freeness of his precious salvation. These views are accompanied with divine comfort and consolation. The believer's heart is filled with joy and peace in believing; and is caused to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, Rom. xv. 13. These enjoyments are indeed rare, and of short continuance; but every believer is occasionally favoured with them, and prefers them infinitely to the husks of sense. Wisdom's ways are sometimes ways of pleasantness indeed; and her paths, paths of peace. A day in God's courts is found, under divine influence, to be better than a thousand elsewhere. In these courts, the believer sees the divine power and glory, and pants for the fruition of both.

Now these graces and comforts are called *first fruits* of the Spirit, because they are—*imperfectly enjoyed in this life*—are of *the same nature* with the expected harvest—and *sure pledges* of its future possession.

1. The *imperfect degrees* in which the graces and comforts of the divine Spirit are possessed in this life, give occasion for their being called *first fruits*; first fruits, in general, bearing very small proportion to the whole harvest. The highest attainments of real Christians in holiness and happiness, here, dwindle to mere points, compared with what they shall enjoy hereafter. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart; and though they now sow in tears, hereafter they shall reap in eternal joy.

Again,

Again, 2. These first fruits are so called, because they are of the *same nature* with the expected *harvest*. I have formerly observed, that grace and glory differ not in *essence*, but only in *degree*. Those devout aspirations which the believer is enabled to exercise occasionally towards his God, and his pleasurable enjoyment of the light of the divine countenance in some happy moments, are the beginnings of heaven. "The men of grace," in this manner, "find glory begun below." They anticipate their future portion, and are enabled to form just, though imperfect conceptions of its nature, from their possession of its first fruits. An additional reason for the appellation of *first fruits*, is, because, 3. They are *sure pledges* of the future possession of the full harvest of eternal glory and blessedness. As certain as the first fruits are enjoyed, the full harvest shall. The purifying and comforting operations of the divine Spirit are hence called the *earnest* of our inheritance, Eph. i. 13, 14. 2 Cor. v. 5. They constitute a begun possession of it; grace in the heart being glory in the bud.

In the possession of these first fruits, the believer is divinely confirmed in the doctrine of a future state of happiness for the people of God. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation opens the eyes of his understanding, that he may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints in light, Eph. i. 17, 18. By the Spirit of God, he knows the things which are freely given him of God, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Could the Israelites deny, either the existence or the fertility

lity of the land of Canaan, when a bunch of its grapes, large enough to employ two men to bear it, was brought them? Numb. xiii. 23. As incapable are God's people of denying the reality and glory of heavenly bliss, when under the sealing influences of the Spirit. *Verily there is a reward for the righteous.*

Thus also is the believer prepared for the full fruition of eternal joys. As a vessel of mercy he is thus afore-prepared unto glory, Rom. ix. 23.—made meet to be a partaker with the saints in light; being wrought for the self-same thing, and possessed of the earnest of the Spirit, Col. i. 12. 2 Cor. v. 5. Renewing grace produces a favouring of the things of God, and gradually increases it for additional meetness for heaven. By the same means also is his *title* established for endless felicity; for, in the possession of these first fruits, he is *sealed* by the holy Spirit of promise, Eph. iv. 3. and God will never deny His own seal, or take back His earnest. Let us now consider,

II. The object for which, according to our text, the Christian waits; and his occasional employment during the delay of his enjoyment of that object.

1. The *object* for which he waits.—“ ’Tis called—the *adoption*; to wit, the *redemption of the body*. The latter of these terms explains the former.

The *redemption of the body*, here, means its perfect deliverance from mortality, corruption, and death, by a joyful resurrection to eternal glory. Then will the soul be re-united to it, and both made completely happy in the full enjoyment



joyment of God for ever. Those innumerable natural and sinful infirmities with which the earthly house of our tabernacle is at present oppressed, will all be left behind in the grave, whence it will be raised in incorruption, glory, and power. Specimens of the wonderful transformation to be accomplished on the bodies of the people of God at the resurrection, are, in the persons of Enoch and Elijah, presented to the sense of the saints in heaven, and to the faith of those on earth. Such as they now are in body and soul, will God's people for ever be.

This redemption of the body is called the *adoption*, because it is an eminent *fruit* of our adoption into the family of God. The full fruits of that divine relation to God will not be enjoyed till mortality is swallowed up of life. To that period the lively Christian directs his expectation, and, with submission to the will of God, ardently desires its commencement. For this he waits. He is sometimes happily assured, that when his earthly frame shall be dissolved, his soul shall immediately enter into an house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. At death, he resigns his body to the dust; there to rest in hope, Psa. xvi. 19. that God will one day have a desire to the work of his own hands, and call it forth by a joyful resurrection, Job xiv. 15.—We proceed to consider,

2. The real Christian's *occasional employment* during the *delay* of the enjoyment of the object for which he waits.—*He groans within himself*. This mode of expression indicates the reality and greatness of his distress. Many indeed are the afflictions of the righteous. The almost incessant

cessant assaults of *Satan*; the alarms and allurements of the *world*; the continued opposition of remaining depravity in the performance of every thing truly good; these, and a thousand other causes, occasion frequent groans of deep-felt anguish. The Christian's heart knows its own bitterness; nor does a stranger intermeddle with its joy: for we must not forget, that there are delightful intervals, in which the first fruits of the heavenly harvest of holiness and joy are possessed by every true believer. In a little while he shall enjoy the full harvest. The ransomed of the Lord shall obtain final joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing for ever flee away, Isa. xxxv. 10.

Before I conclude, permit me to remind you, in general, that the heirs of heaven are, in some degree, favoured in *this* life with the *first fruits* thereof. These, we have observed, are the *graces* and *consolations* of the divine Spirit. By these, souls are prepared, and their title ascertained to eternal joys. No evidence of a title to, nor any meetness for, heaven, can exist without these first fruits. You must consequently perceive it to be matter of the greatest importance to possess them. Allow me then to inquire, with the concern of a sincere friend, whether or not you possess these fruits? Do you know experimentally what it is to enjoy the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God, and those consolations which He alone can impart? Are you spoilt for the vile and vain objects of the world and sin; and do you begin to thirst after true holiness, and the pleasure arising from the light of the divine countenance? If so, bless God,

God, and rejoice; for great is your cause so to do. But if this is not your case, your state is deplorable. Your faith is fancy, your hope delusion, and your end will be destruction. May God have mercy upon you and deliver you.

Our doctrine affords great encouragement to even the weakest in faith. We are willing to admit that you are poor, guilty, weak, and unworthy creatures—that you are groaning almost continually under some sin or sorrow. But, though this is the case, can you deny but that there are some lucid intervals when “graces reign,” and the heart is made happy in the enjoyment of a sense of divine love? If you cannot deny this, be assured these are the *first fruits* of endless felicity in heaven. You possess the *earnest* of it, and may be assured of possessing for ever the whole. Heaven has already begun to dawn, and will shine more and more unto the perfect day. The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil.

Let every believer carefully avoid grieving that Holy Spirit of God whereby he is sealed unto the day of redemption. We grieve Him as a *Sanctifier* by listening to the solicitations of sin; and as a *Comforter*, by applying to broken cisterns for the waters of consolation. May we be preserved from both these evils! “Oh! may the Spirit’s holy fire” daily descend, to purify and comfort us, and produre assurance of heavenly joys! Hath not our heavenly Father promised his holy Spirit to them that ask? Let us ask and receive, that our joys may be full.

In



In the present state, frequent cause and occasion will be given for sorrow and mourning; but, times of refreshing shall come, even *here*, from the presence of the Lord. In heaven alone are perfect and uninterrupted joys to be expected. We are now "marching through Immanuel's land, to fairer worlds on high;" and He who hath called us to go forth to the spiritual Canaan will safely bring us thither, notwithstanding every intervening "thorny maze." Let us beware of being satisfied with any present enjoyments or attainments; but be looking for, and hastening in ardent desire to, the coming of the Lord, who will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and in whose presence we shall for ever possess fulness of joy.

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Ver. 24, 25.

*For we are saved by hope: But hope that is seen is not hope: For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

THESE words constitute a reason for what the Apostle had advanced in the foregoing verse. He had affirmed, that believers, at present, groaned under the oppression of many sorrows and sinful infirmities, earnestly expecting and waiting for complete deliverance. "For," adds he, "though they *are* saved, their salvation is not in full possession, but in hope, and sure reversion, being laid up and secured in Christ for them." This reason he illustrates from the general nature of hope, which, properly speaking,

ing, "is a comfortable expectation of some *future* benefit;" for what any one has in hand, and sees himself possessed of, how can it be said, with any propriety, that he still only hopes for it?

He then goes on to observe the influence and efficacy of Christian hope, as productive of a patient waiting for the fruition of its object. "For if we hope" aright, saith he, "for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

In the text, the *nature*, and the moral *efficacy*, of Christian hope, are the objects which lay claim to our attention. May we be assisted, profitably to consider both!

The *nature* of divine hope. It is a special grace of God, whereby a real believer expects and waits for the full accomplishment of all the good which He hath promised.—Let us particularly consider the Author, subject, and object, of this hope.

1. Its *author* is GOD; who being *the God of all grace*, 1 Pet. v. 10. is consequently *the God of hope*, Rom. xv. 13. by whose efficacious influence alone it can be produced. According to the Apostle's doctrine, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. the three cardinal graces of faith, hope, and love, are essential constituents of the Christian character; and each and every one of them is the fruit of the special operation of the Spirit of God. *Faith* is necessary for our pardon and justification; *hope* for our comfort and joy, Rom. v. 2. and *love* for cheerful obedience to the divine will, 1 John v. 3. A good hope is *from* heaven in its origin, as well as *towards* heaven in its tendency. Very different is it from what often assumes its name,  
and

and which ought rather to be called presumption.

2. The *subject* of hope is—a *true believer*. Hope is a fruit of faith, being the proper acting of the soul towards things believed, as good, absent, and certain. “To hope without a promise, is to claim a debt that was never owing;” and that faith which produces not hope is *fancy*, and that hope which exceeds the grounds and evidences of faith is *presumption*. These graces are inseparable and proportional in their mutual exercises. Faith is first, not in order of *time*, but of *nature* and of operation. Faith’s object is the *truth* of the promise; its *goodness* is the object of hope. This heavenly seed is of course sown in the soil only of a *believing* heart.

3. The *object* of this grace is, in general, a *promised, attainable, good*. Every thing truly good, God has graciously promised his people; for, “*no good thing* will He withhold from them who walk uprightly,” Psa. lxxxiv. 11. For every thing truly good, they are therefore authorised to hope. God Himself being the chief, all-comprehensive good, He in particular is the object of divine hope, and hence is called *the hope of Israel*, Jer. xvii. 13. And as it is in heaven only where He will be perfectly enjoyed, hence it is further called *the hope of glory*, Col. i. 27.—*of eternal life*, Tit. iii. 7.—*and of salvation*, 1 Theff. v. 7.

With regard to its object, hope is more limited than faith; *goodness* only being the object of the former; whereas *truth*, whether good or evil, *threatenings* as well as *promises*, constitutes the object of the latter. An additional circumstance,



stance, descriptive of the object of hope, is its *futurity*; “for hope that is *seen* is not hope.” To things invisible and unenjoyed it directs its attention.—We now proceed to consider,

II. The moral *efficacy* of Christian hope. According to the text, it produces *patient waiting* for its object.

The influence of hope over the human mind is great. “It is the spring of all human activity. Upon futurity men are constantly suspended. From the prospect of some future good, they will toil and suffer through the whole course of life; and it is not so much what they are at present, as what they hope to be in some future time, that enlivens their motions, fixes attention, and stimulates industry. Now, if in the common affairs of life, such is the energy of hope, even when its object is neither very considerable, nor very certain; what effects may it not be expected to produce, when it rests upon an object so splendid as a life of immortal felicity? Were this hope entertained with that full persuasion which Christian faith demands, it would, in truth, not merely alleviate, but totally annihilate, all human miseries. It would banish discontent, extinguish grief, and suspend the very feeling of pain.”

In proportion to the degrees in which this grace is possessed, will be the fruits of its production. It will excite *vigorous exertions*—produce *patience* under *sufferings*—and will *calm* and *compose* the mind during the *delay* of its *expected enjoyments*.

1. It will excite *vigorous exertions*. Sin will be the object of its warmest opposition. “Who-  
foever

soever hath this hope purifieth himself, 1 John iii. 3. and earnestly thirsts for "cleansing from *all filthiness* of flesh and spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1. It will trample under foot this present evil world, with all its pomp, pleasure, and treasure. Hope of heaven gives victory over the most alluring objects of earth. *Abraham*, under its influence, "sojourned in the land of promise as in a *strange country*; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Heb. xi. 9, 10. As a *lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3. it animates in the service of God, and removes that lassitude and indifference which occasionally oppress His people. Its anticipation of future felicity prompts to increasing meetness for full fruition; and from its possession of the first fruits, it judges of the nature, and rejoices in the prospect, of the full harvest.

2. It will produce *patience under sufferings*. True patience is *the patience of hope*, 1 Thes. i. 3. It calms the soul, and encourages it under all disquietudes more confidently to hope in God, Psa. xlii. 11. It descries approaching deliverance; assures of final salvation surpassing conception great; and convinces of the utility of afflictions, as furthering the great design of preparing for the perfect enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints in light. By all which means, patient submission to the divine will is effectually produced.

3. Hope *composes* the mind, and keeps it *tranquil* during the *delay of expected blessings*. God is pleased, for wise reasons, frequently to delay (according to human estimation) the bestowment of what He hath promised His children.

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There is a *set time to favour Zion*, Psa. cii. 13. and every individual of which the church of God is constituted. For that time 'tis the duty of the people of God patiently to wait. But, in consequence of remaining depravity, this is found very difficult. Now, it is the property of this grace to suppress rising impatience at delay. It acknowledges it to be *good, for a man both to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord*, Lam. iii. 26.—Assures that God's time is always best; that delays are necessary; the longer the delay the sweeter the enjoyment; while one blessing is with-held, another shall be imparted, &c. By these and such like considerations, it preserves, as a helmet, 1 Thes. v. 8. the soul from a thousand assaults of sin and Satan.

As every thing has its counterfeit, and all deception is dangerous, it cannot be improper, brethren, to intreat you to examine the nature of that hope which it is presumed you all profess to have. You are enjoined *to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. Be sure to have a solid reason to assign for your hope. See that it be properly founded upon the word of promise. To expect what was never promised is absurd. No wonder if such a hope be for ever disappointed.

Such, who upon examination have reason to conclude that they are possessed of a good hope through grace, I would exhort to be peculiarly thankful to the great Author of it, 1 Pet. i. 3. Heaven in hope, is infinitely preferable to worlds in possession. "The greatest monarch of the earth" (says good Father Gurnel) "will be  
I glad,



glad, in a dying hour, to change his *crown* for thy *helmet*;" (alluding to 1 Thes. v. 8.) "his crown will not procure him this helmet; but thy helmet will bring thee to a crown, when he shall have none to wear; a crown, not of gold, but of glory, which once on shall never be taken off, as his is sure to be."

Let your deportment correspond to the magnitude of your hopes. "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, who look for, and hasten unto, the coming of the day of God?" 2 Pet. iii. 11. Rejoice in hope of future glory, Rom. v. 2. and let that hope conquer the immoderate love of life, and fear of death. Death is the period appointed for the fruition of your hopes of perfect happiness; and should you fear to be completely happy? Surely no!—As the influence of hope is so very great, every effort should be exerted for its increase and establishment. Ardent prayer, attendance on divine ordinances, together with serious contemplation of the divine promises, &c. should constantly employ you. Thus use diligence for the attainment of the full assurance of hope unto the end, Heb. vi. 11. And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, and cause you to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 26.

*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

**V**ARIOUS motives are produced by the Apostle, in the context, to excite patience under those sufferings which believers must endure with Christ, previous to their glorification with Him. The principal of these motives are, says Dr. Manton, "The hope of glory to come; and the help of the Spirit for the present." The former has been considered; the latter is asserted in the text, and now claims our consideration.

From the variety and greatness of the motives urged for the exercise of patience under afflictions, and supposed delays of expected blessings; we may infer the importance of this grace, and should be concerned to possess and exercise it on all requisite occasions. To God, as *the God of patience*, Rom. xv. 5. let application be made for more and more of this grace, that it may *have its perfect work*.

The text informs us, that, besides the encouraging influence of divine hope, true believers enjoy also the peculiar aid of the divine Spirit under all their afflictions; and that one special mean by which the divine Spirit communicates this help, is by *exciting* ardent prayer to God, and *assisting* for the acceptable performance of it.

it.—*He maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* Let us consider,

I. The *aid* which the divine Spirit communicates to real believers under their present afflictions.—*The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.*

*Infirmities* here may mean, either *afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions*, Heb. v. 2.—2 Cor. xii. 5. 10. or those *spiritual weaknesses*, and defects in grace, to which every believer is subject, chap. vi. 19. 'Tis very probable, that both these are intended in the text. If so, the aid of the divine Spirit must mean gracious support under afflictions; and sanctifying influence for the exercise and increase of Christian graces; and it is an eternal truth, that He imparts both to every real believer.

1. He graciously *supports* under *afflictions*. The people of God would faint in the day of adversity, their own strength is so small, Prov. xiv. 10. were it not for the seasonable succour which the Spirit of God affords them. In infinite love, He strengthens them with strength in their souls, Psa. cxxxviii. 3.—renews their strength whilst waiting on their God, Isa. xl. 31.—makes them of good courage, Psa. xxvii. 14. and xxxi. 24.—and has engaged evermore to proportion His strength to their day, Deut. xxxiii. 25. Indeed, He only can give real help in trouble; for vain is the help of man, Psa. lx. 11. By human strength, shall no man be able, either to avoid the *blow*, or with patience to sustain the *stroke*, of adversity. Happy are they who enjoy the presence and support of an Almighty Agent when in the thorny paths of afflictions!

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2. The divine Spirit communicates *sanctifying influence* for the purpose of exciting and strengthening Christian graces. The grace of God in the heart, is a tender plant in an unkindly soil, requiring the greatest care and cultivation. Genial showers and beams must also concur for its growth. When these are suspended, it ceases to shoot forth; it begins to flag and wither.—But the blessed Spirit prevents its total decay and death. He descends *as the dew upon his Israel*, Hof. xiv. 5. As a “heavenly wind,” he dissipates those clouds which obscured the beauteous face of day, and excluded the benign beams of the Sun of righteousness. Under these influences, the graces, of which He is the sole Author, *revive as the corn*. The believer again flourishes in the courts of the Lord, Psa. xcii. 12, 13. flourishes as the palm-tree; his branches spread, and his beauty becomes as the olive-tree, Hof. xiv. 6, 7. These revivals may very properly be considered as constituting a material part of that help, which the text informs us, the divine Spirit grants to the people of God. We now proceed to observe,

II. That one special mean, by which the Spirit communicates his help, is, by exciting *ardent prayer* to God, and assisting for the acceptable performance of this duty.—*We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

Prayer is the appointed channel through which “mercy, and grace to help in time of need,” are imparted to the humble supplicant, Heb. iv. 16. “Call upon me in the day of trouble,”

says a gracious God, "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Psa. l. 15. and, agreeable to this gracious injunction, and promise, "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth and delivereth them out of all their troubles, Psa. xxxiv. 17. This consolatory truth was exemplified in Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 38.—Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18.—David, Psa. cxxxviii. 3.—Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 9, &c. and will be in all God's people.

The text informs us of our own insufficiency for the acceptable and successful performance of this duty; and of the Spirit's gracious aid for both. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought," &c. Our insufficiency on this subject regards the *matter* and the *manner* of prayer.

1. With regard to the *matter* of prayer, we greatly need the peculiar aid of the ever-blessed Spirit. Without His influences, we neither know our *wants*—the *sources* of supply—nor the proper *ends* for which we should implore respective blessings; though each of these is necessary to be known for the purpose of real and successful prayer to God.

We know not naturally our principal *wants*. Of neither *faith*, nor *unbelief*, have we any proper conceptions without divine *instruction*. Acquaintance with both is, however, necessary. They are sources, the first of purity and peace; the last, of sin and sorrow. Equally ignorant are we of the *remaining depravity of our hearts*, as it exists in darkness in the understanding, rebellion in the will, disorder and indifference in the affections.—The *nature* and *necessity* of *genuine*

*nuine holiness* are also buried in impenetrable shades, till, "through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high visit us," and shew us both. And, with regard to *temporal* mercies, "Who knows what is good for a man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?" Ecc. vi. 12. Does he not need the influence of divine wisdom to determine a choice of such blessings as are fittest for him, and agreeable to the divine will to bestow?—Proper knowledge of these subjects is absolutely necessary for ardent prayer to God; and this knowledge the Spirit alone can impart.

He also reveals the proper *sources* of supply. These are, the "great and precious" promises of the Gospel. In them, are given unto us, "all things that pertain to life and godliness." "There is nothing that we can want," says Dr. Owen, "but God has promised; and there is nothing that He has promised, which we do not want." Proper acquaintance with the divine promises is necessary to encourage our approaches unto God; and, by the Spirit of God alone, we can know aright the things which are freely given to us of God, 1 Cor. ii. 11. He reveals the truth and goodness of the promises, and produces that confidence in them, whence originate suitable supplies of every needful blessing.

Lastly, the same divine Agent directs the Christian to proper *ends* in his addresses to the throne of grace. 'Tis very possible, according to the doctrine of St. James, iv. 3. for persons to defeat the success of their prayers, by the



turpitude of their designs, or objects, in praying. But the blessed Spirit prevents this in those whom He aids, making intercession for them "according to the will of God," and inducing them sincerely to aim at the glory of God, and their own improvement in true holiness. With regard

2. To the *manner* of prayer, the Spirit is said to "make intercession for us, with unutterable groanings."

The office of intercession is attributed both to Christ and the Spirit. The different manner of their execution of this office is thus distinguished by the judicious *Charnock*—"Christ is an advocate with God *for us*; and the Spirit is an advocate with God *in us*, John xiv. 17. Christ is our advocate, pleading for us in his *own* name; the Spirit is an advocate, assisting us to plead for ourselves in CHRIST's name; Christ pleads for us in the presence of God; the Spirit directs us to such arguments as may be used for pleas for ourselves. The Spirit does not groan Himself, but excites in us strong groans, by affecting us with our condition, and putting an edge upon our petitions, by strengthening us *in the inward man*, Eph. iii. 16. The Spirit is an advocate to *indite* our petitions; and Christ is an advocate to *present* them," &c.

The unutterable groanings He is said to excite, are expressive of those earnest desires and breathings of soul, accompanied with importunity and hope, for deliverance from respective evils, and for the enjoyment of requisite blessings, which exceed the power of language to express. In the production of those ardent desires,

desires, He reveals the blessed God (in allusion to the mercy-seat upon the ark) as seated on a “ throne of Grace,” Heb. iv. 16. “ waiting to be gracious,” Isa. xxx. 18.—As an infinitely tender FATHER, to whom, as such, His children have access through Christ by the divine Spirit, Eph. ii. 18. Filial boldness is also produced, whereby they draw near with true hearts, and humble assurance of faith, Heb. x. 19, &c. and, in the great name of their Advocate with the Father, they plead for and obtain every needful blessing. Blessed are the people thus highly favoured of the Lord!

As a praying disposition is essential to the character of a real Christian, woe to those of you who are destitute of it! Divine wrath will one day be poured out on those who call not upon God’s name, Psa. lxxix. 6. Jer. x. 25. Consider this, ye, who, like “ natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed,” never open your mouths morning and evening in grateful acknowledgments by prayer and praise to the living God, in whom you live, move, and have your being; and without whose grace and mercy you are undone for ever. May God be merciful to you, and hasten that period when of each of you it may be truly said—“ Behold, he prayeth!”

For the precious aid granted by the divine Spirit for the successful performance of the interesting and important duty of prayer, the people of God can never be sufficiently thankful. You are not reduced to the pitiable necessity of using *forms* of prayer drawn up by *others* in which to address your God and Father. An

Almighty Agent is ever at hand to aid and succeed your approaches to God. Oh bless, with fervent gratitude, his sacred name!

Let me exhort you to be very careful and diligent to exercise this heavenly gift of prayer to God, in dependance upon the aid of "the Spirit of grace and of supplication." You are enjoined by an authority, which I hope you will ever revere, "to be" anxiously "careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication to make your requests known unto God," Phil. iv. 6. Thus will you obtain divine support under all your troubles, and that peace "which passeth all understanding."—Your Father will be *inquired of* for every good thing which He hath promised you, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Every such thing is to be received and enjoyed in a way of prayer.—May we live in the daily exercise of this beneficial employ, and be enabled to look forward to that happy period, when the perfect enjoyment of all good will for ever preclude prayer, and constitute a foundation for eternal praise!

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Ver. 27.

*And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

THE preceding verse informed us of the gracious aid, afforded by the divine Spirit to true believers, for the purpose of ardent prayer to God: This informs us of the acceptability of such



such prayer. The one of these is the necessary consequence of the other. The prayers which God's Spirit excites, and which he assists us to perform, will ever be acceptable to God. For this, the text assigns a satisfactory reason;—"because the Spirit maketh intercession for the Saints, *according to the will of God.*" That will is revealed in the sacred word; and the operations of the Spirit in the heart, and the revelations of the Spirit in the word, ever coincide.

The text, you perceive, makes particular application of a divine attribute to the subject of the acceptability of the prayers of God's people. God searcheth hearts; and consequently knows the import and meaning of those desires and unutterable groanings, which his own Spirit excites in the hearts of His people, and will graciously regard them.—Let us particularly consider these subjects.

I. The divine attribute affirmed of the ever blessed God—*He searcheth hearts.*

The term *search*, is metaphorical in its application to God. To creatures only does it properly belong to search, and by mental labour investigate truth. God perfectly beholds, and comprehends, by what is called simple intuition, every object, every heart, and each dawning purpose there, without the use of intermediate ideas, or any exertion.

God's perfect knowledge of the human heart is frequently asserted in Scripture. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. I the Lord search the

heart and try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to his doings, Jer. xvii. 10. The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Hell and destruction are before the Lord, how much more the hearts of the children of men?" Prov. xv. 11. Complete knowledge of either our own, or the hearts of others, is unattainable by even our most elaborate researches.—“But all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do,” Heb. iv. 13.

The exact knowledge of the human heart, which the text attributes to God, necessarily flows from His *immensity*, and is essential to His character as *Creator* and *moral Governor* of men. With regard to the first of these, God himself thus demands, “Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. Can any then hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him?”—Impossible! Respecting the divine character of CREATOR, the reasoning of the Holy Spirit, Psa. xciv. 9, 10. is unanswerable. He who “fashioneth our hearts alike, considereth all our thoughts, Psa. xxxiii. 15. No thought can be withholden from Him,” Job xlii. 2. Moreover, without the most perfect cognizance of the human heart, how is it possible that the human character can be fully ascertained, and an unerring sentence formed, decisive of the eternal states of men, by God, as their moral GOVERNOR and Judge? For these purposes, this cognizance is necessary, and its necessity proves the reality of its existence;  
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seeing that "God will bring *every* work into judgment, with every *secret* thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Eccl. xii. 14.

This solemn doctrine is calculated to make sinners in Zion afraid, and overwhelm hypocrites with fearfulness. Men walk in masquerade with men, and under the most sanctimonious pretensions, and artificial courtesy of manners, often conceal the basest principles, and most malignant designs. But with God, there is no such shuffling! "On human hearts He bends a jealous eye," and His hand is employed in forming that record of your thoughts, words, and deeds, which will be fully manifested to assembled worlds in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Oh may you profitably contemplate this awful subject, and ardently implore that "truth" of pure and undefiled religion "in the inwards parts," which God requires! Psa. li. 6.

Such, who, with regard to their *fellow-mortals*, may be considered as *innocent* sufferers, ought to derive considerable encouragement from God's perfect knowledge of the human heart. If traduced by men, persecuted and reproached falsely for Christ's sake;—rejoice: "Your witness is in heaven." Commit thy way, and all thy concerns, unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day, Psa. xxxvii. 5, 6. Moreover, "if thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter, for He that is higher than the highest regardeth," Eccl. v. 8. and will in  
due



due time rectify every apparent disorder which now prevails.

May the important truth we have been considering be productive also of moral influence on our conduct, and each of us daily feel the solemn import of these words—THOU GOD SEEST ME, Gen. xvi. 13. We proceed now to consider,

II. The particular application which the Apostle makes of the subject which we have discussed, to that of the acceptability of the prayers of God's people. Because God searcheth the heart, he must of course perfectly know the import of those desires and unutterable groanings which His own Spirit excites in the hearts of His people, and will graciously regard them.

The knowledge attributed to God of the import and meaning of the desires and secret groanings of His people in prayer, is twofold; it is a knowledge of *apprehension*, and of *approbation*.

1. Of *apprehension* or simple knowledge. He accurately distinguisheth between the operations of our own minds in natural desires, and those of His Spirit exciting such desires as are spiritual and acceptable. *The Lord weigheth the Spirit*, Prov. xvi. 2. and perfectly knows by what principles, motives, and ends, we are actuated and influenced in our approaches to Him in prayer.

The proper consideration of *this* knowledge is, or ought to be, matter of real consolation to the people of God, who sometimes neither do nor can utter their conceptions to God. In the  
primitive

primitive church, such who intelligently and cordially offered up an Amen! to the prayers of others, prayed as really as those others, though they themselves uttered not a word, 1 Cor. xiv. 16. And why, but because He who searcheth the hearts, perfectly knew what was the mind of the Spirit? And thus it is still, in those assemblies for social prayer which do honour to Christian churches, and are found such helps to the success of the Christian ministry. Such of you who attend those assemblies, though you pray not vocally or with your voice; yet by the concurrence of your secret desires with those who do, you as really pray in the divine estimation as they. Let this encourage you, my Christian friends, to frequent those assemblies, for both your own good and that of others, remembering the words of our gracious Lord, Mat. xviii. 19, 20.

As, on such occasions as the above, the people of God *do* not, so on others they *cannot*, utter their conceptions and desires in prayer to God. There are seasons, in which, with David, they are so troubled that they cannot speak, Psa. lxxvii. 4. The only language they can use is that of sighs and groans. And, blessed be the name of our gracious God! He perfectly understands, and mercifully regards, this distressful style. When the Israelites groaned under the oppression of the most cruel bondage, Moses informs us "that God heard their groaning, and remembered His covenant," Exod. ii. 24. "Lord," saith the Psalmist, "all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee,"

thee," Psa. xxxviii. 9. And again, Psa. vi. 8. "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." "From heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner; and for the oppression of the poor, and for the sighing of the needy, I will arise, saith the Lord," Psa. cii. 19, 20. and xii. 5. Thus it appears that "the Lord knoweth our frame," and every sorrow with which we are oppressed. Though we can do no more than sigh and groan before Him, those sighs and groans need no interpreter to the divine mind. God perfectly understands their import, and will administer seasonable relief; for, blessed be His holy name! He not only knows, but,

2. *Approves* of the desires and petitionary groanings of His people. For this, a satisfactory reason is assigned—"The divine Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." This reason is constituted of three parts, every one of which amounts, indeed, to a substantial proof of the reality of God's approbation of the prayers of His people. These parts are—The *Agent* by whose aid they pray,—the *Spirit*; the *description* given of the *subjects* of prayer,—*saints*; and the *rule* by which their addresses to God are regulated,—*the will of God*.

The first of these has already been considered; and we have no more, at present, to add on that subject, but, That such is the unity of design and of will in the ever to be adored Trinity, that all whom the Spirit makes intercession *in*, the Son makes intercession *for*, and both



both according to the good pleasure of the Father; and hence the certain success of their prayers who are

Described in the text as—*saints*. The appellation of saints is often given the people of God in scripture, and refers to that *divine change* effected in them, whereby they hate and avoid sin, and love and practise true holiness. The imperfection of the saints in the present state, is supposed by their need of prayer; prayer ever flowing from a sense of those wants which are quite inconsistent with absolute perfection. *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.* Notwithstanding the sinful infirmities of these persons, their prayers are acceptable to God through Christ; for the prayer of the upright is his delight, Prov. xv. 8. We know that God heareth not unconverted sinners; their sacrifices are abominations to Him; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him He heareth, John ix. 31. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, James v. 16. Of this, additional evidence appears from

The *rule* by which the prayers of such persons are regulated,—*the will of God*. They are taught and enabled to pray according to the *revealed* will of God, and with proper submission to that which is *secret*, Deut. xxix. 29.

A pious writer observes, that, with regard to matters of prayer, some are merely *lawful*: Such are all indifferent things; as when Moses solicited permission to enter the promised land, which God thought proper to refuse, Deut. iii. 22. Others are not only lawful, but *enjoined*; such

such as the conversion and salvation of sinners in general; of our own family and friends in particular; and the promotion of the divine glory by the additional success of the ministry of the Gospel, &c. For these blessings, it is not only lawful, but our *duty*, to pray. And, lastly, other things there are, which we may be confident are absolutely good and necessary for us. Such as the divine Spirit in general, and His graces and consolations in particular. These, we may be assured, God will give His children, Luke xi. 13. And of course we may confidently pray for them. But respecting blessings of the two former kinds, submission must be exercised to the will of God in a multiplicity of circumstances.

Thus then the divine Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God; and assists them to implore divine blessings with faith, fervour, and for right ends. On all the preceding accounts, we need not wonder that the prayers of the saints come up with acceptance as a memorial before God, and are by Him graciously regarded, Acts x. 4. Rev. viii. 3, 4.

From the preceding remarks, may we be fully convinced of our need of the aid of the divine Spirit for the purpose of acceptable prayer to God, and humbly implore that aid!

Is it so, according to our text, that the prayers of the *saints* alone are acceptable to God? Woe then to those *profligate sinners*, who, so far from sustaining this character, scoff at, and make it the subject of their impious jests and wicked witticisms. “Judgments are prepared for such scorners,

scorners, and stripes for the backs of such fools. Now therefore be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong," Prov. xix. 29. Isa. xxviii. 22.

Methinks I hear some humble follower of the Redeemer cry out, If God hear the prayers of none but *saints*, woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, a polluted unworthy sinner!—But, does not your consternation arise from misapprehension of the term saints? Saints on earth are only *converted sinners*, who hate and avoid sin; depend on Christ alone for salvation; and love and endeavour to practise holiness. If you are not *such* saints, you are undone indeed. But if your characters correspond with the description now given, you are of the number of the saints, and may enjoy all the privileges connected with that title.

Lastly, as acceptable prayer must be according to the will of God, let me exhort you to be very conversant with the sacred scriptures, as the revelation of that will. In dependance on the aid of the Spirit, regulate your addresses at the throne of Grace by their important contents, and then St. John assures you that you shall succeed, 1 John v. 14, 15.



Ver. 28.

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

THESE very encouraging words are admirably adapted to promote the Apostle's general design in the context. That design evidently appears to be—the encouragement and support of the people of God under their various afflictions. For the production of these happy effects, he presents us with a variety of motives, each of which arises in regular gradation before us. To the greatness of future glory; the nature and influence of divine hope; and the gracious aid of the blessed Spirit; he adds, in our text, the co-operation of all things (not excepting the greatest afflictions) for good to them who love God, as a necessary fruit of being called according to His purpose. *This* motive, it might be reasonably supposed, would prove fully sufficient to answer the end for which it was urged, and produce the calmest submission unto, and the most cheerful acquiescence in, the divine will, under the most afflictive dispensations.

Two subjects present themselves for discussion, in our text;—a singularly great *privilege*—and, a *description* of the persons interested in it.—May the Giver of every good and perfect gift render truly profitable our observations on both these subjects!

I. A

I. A singularly great privilege is asserted in the text;—the working together of all things for good, to the people of God. Here we may observe,—the gracious *end* to be accomplished in them—*good*.—The extent of the *means* of accomplishment—*all things* contribute to this end.—The *manner* of the operation of all things—*together*, or in delightful harmony.—And, lastly, the truth and *certainty* of this doctrine,—*We know*, saith the Apostle, not merely hope or conjecture, but know, with certainty, that thus it will be.—Let us briefly consider these encouraging topics.

1. The *end* to be accomplished by every thing respecting the people of God is—their *good*. The good here intended, is not that of absolute freedom from the *in-being* of sin; nor from *losses* and *crosses* of various kinds. Perfect deliverance from these will never be enjoyed in the present life. Nor is it that good which believers *themselves* have sometimes in view, but that which God (whose thoughts infinitely exceed theirs) hath in view for them. Nor is it merely *temporal* good; though *this* is often accomplished by very unpromising events; as the exaltation of Joseph by the unnatural hatred of his brethren, Gen. l. 20. and the multiplication of the Israelites by the oppressions of the tyrannical court of Egypt, Exod. i. 12. But, what the text principally intends, is

That *spiritual good* which is suited to the present state of real believers; such as—*Their increase in divine knowledge and religious experience*, Rom. v. 3, 4.—*Increasing conformity to the divine Image in true holiness*; the fruit of most of the  
divine

divine dispensations being the taking away of sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. and making believers, in a greater degree, partakers of the divine holiness, Heb. xii. 10.—*The increase of evangelical humiliation*; as the diversified events which befel the Israelites on their journey to the promised land, were “to humble and prove them, and do them good in the latter end,” Deut. viii. 15, 16.—*Additional consolation*, by weaning from the world and its various alluring objects, and promoting more intimate communion and fellowship with Christ, by whom our consolations abound, 2 Cor. i. 4, 5.—*The promotion of a life of faith*, and steady dependance upon God, and more and more contentment, and submission to the divine will, Phil. iv. 11. And, finally,—*Increasing preparation and meetness for the unutterable happiness of heaven*. This is, comparatively, but a very small specimen of that good, which the God of goodness intends His beloved children, and which He will accomplish by,

2. The most extensive means.—*All things shall co-operate to this desirable end: Things good, and even such as are evil.*

(1) *Things which are good*.—The ever-blessed God Himself works for their good. His *attributes*, *word*, and *works*, co-operate for this end. His *wisdom* directs, His *power* preserves, His *holiness* purifies, His *mercy* commiserates, His *truth* encourages, and His *immutability* secures and confirms His people to eternal life. His *word*, in both law and gospel, works for their good. The *former* is a schoolmaster, to bring them to Christ; the *latter* is the source of  
their



their salvation and joy. His *works*, whether of nature, providence, or grace, contribute to the same end.—CHRIST, in his person, offices, and grace, works for their good. He is their “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,” 1 Cor. i. 31. All He did and suffered was for them. His blood pardons, His righteousness justifies, and His grace sanctifies them.—The SPIRIT also, by his gracious influences and operations, works for the good of God’s people. He enlightens, quickens, strengthens, comforts, and enlarges them.—To the same end concurs divine PROVIDENCE, whose ever-wakeful eyes run to and fro throughout the earth in behalf of the upright in heart, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.—ORDINANCES of every kind are for their good, being appointed for the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. iv. 12. And,—all the MERCIES of God, temporal as well as spiritual, work for the same end, leading the people of God to repentance not to be repented of. And not only good, but even

(2) *Evil* things work for their advantage. “I would not,” says a pious Author, “for all the world say, that SIN would work for good to them that *love* sin, and *live* in sin; but I can say, before all the world, that it will work for good to them that *love* God and *hate* sin;—to them that are *humbled* for it, and to them that *fly* to Christ to be saved from it,” &c. God graciously over-rules its remains in His people for beneficial purposes—for increasing humility, watchfulness, prayer, godly sorrow, &c. SATAN himself comes under this head; whose temptations

ations and suggestions would never be permitted to assault the real Christian, if God did not intend to over-rule them for his good. He takes occasion from Satan's hostilities to display His ability of delivering the godly from them, 2 Pet. ii. 9. and of bruising him under their feet, Rom. xvi. 20. The *wants* and *weaknesses* of God's people work for their good. From the former God takes occasion to magnify his all-sufficiency; and from the latter, that of His power, 2 Cor. xii. 9. To the same purpose operate those *internal conflicts* with which believers are sometimes exercised, as they occasion more ardent addresses to God, and more attentive application to His holy word as the source of comfort and support. To conclude (for instances would be endless), all their *afflictions*, of whatever kind, or from whatsoever cause, shall all contribute to the present and final good of the people of God. It shall be found good for them to have been afflicted, Psa. cxix. 71. as their afflictions shall lessen their attachment to *this* world, and concur with sanctifying grace gradually to prepare them for an infinitely *better*. With regard to,

3. The *manner* of the operation of all things for the good of God's people, it is said to be *together*, or in delightful harmony. There is a marvellous coincidence of wisdom, love, and power, in all the divine dispensations to the people of God, by virtue of which every event and occurrence which concerns them, operates for their good. Many medical ingredients are in their own nature extremely pernicious; but their noxious qualities are prevented from in-  
juring,

juring, and prove even salutary, by the judicious intermixture of proper correctives. Infinite wisdom is employed by equal love to medicate every bitter cup administered to the real Christian, and which, we may be assured, will of course prove medicinal. The Apostle possessed,

4. The utmost *evidence* of the truth of this encouraging doctrine.—*We know*, saith he, not hope, or conjecture, that thus it shall be. The Apostle's certainty of this truth, originated from sources common to the people of God in general. These were,—the divine promises;—the experience of the saints;—and the nature of the thing; for God must certainly have *some* end in view, in all His actions; and, doubtless, that on which His heart is most set, and is last in execution, must be that end. And this, next to His own glory, is the present and everlasting good of His people. We now proceed to consider,

II. The *description* given of the persons interested in this unspeakable privilege. They are such who love God, and that in consequence of being called according to His purpose.

✓ True love to God, includes *knowledge* of, and *faith* in Him; and it is essential to its nature to be *supreme*. Without right *knowledge* of God, it is impossible to have true love to Him; for who, properly speaking, can love an unknown object? God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must previously shine into the heart, with the rays of His infinite excellency, in order to produce divine affections to-



wards Him. Divine *faith* is equally necessary, as a grace which *worketh by love*. By faith, the believer perceives the excellency of God's loving-kindness; reposes cheerful confidence under the shadow of His wings, Psa. xxxvi. 7. and thus his heart is filled with grateful love to the God of his salvation. The first of these is the source of love, *properly* so called, consisting in an union of heart to God for *His own* infinite excellency; the last is the parent of what ought to be termed *gratitude*, or a lively sense of favours conferred, with ardent desires to return suitable acknowledgments.

It is essential also to true love to God, that it be *supreme*. "In the scale of Beings," says a Christian philosopher, "all objects ought to be loved in proportion to their degree of beauty or perfection; and, consequently, the highest degree of perfection ought to be loved with the highest degree of love, and the several subordinate degrees of perfection with proportional degrees of the affection of the mind. And since finite, when compared with infinite, vanishes quite, or becomes nothing, it follows necessarily (since there is but one object that is infinitely good and perfect, and all others are but created and finite, that is, in comparison are nothing) that, according to the eternal and immutable laws of analogy, the one supreme good, endued with infinite perfection, ought to be loved with a love infinitely superior to our affection for other things." This rule, under the influence of the God of order, is conscientiously observed by every real Christian.

Deferring

Deferring the consideration of *that calling*, which is the specified source of divine love, until we consider the 30th verse, I shall only at present observe, that where divine love to God exists in the heart, its *fruits* will appear in the life, in an abhorrence of every evil, and a cleaving to every good. And as this love is the characteristic of those for whom all things shall work together for good, we ought to examine ourselves concerning our possession of it, and without it rest not content. The possession of divine love, either in sensible affection, or ardent desire, is essential to the character of a real Christian. Such who answer this description, surely have the greatest reason for grateful contentment, and devout admiration of the infinite goodness of God. And, as God in all things intends your *good*, may you in all things evermore intend His *glory*!

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## Ver. 29.

*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.*

**W**ITH regard to the *connexion* of these words with those in the preceding verse, it is obvious that they are used as a reason, either why *all things work together for good* to God's people; or why they are said to be *called according to His purpose*. To each of these subjects, this reason is equally applicable,—because God hath irrevocably predestinated His people

to be conformed to the image of His Son; which image consists in holiness and needful sufferings in the present life; and in eternal glory and bliss in that which is to come. Hence, their effectual calling, and the co-operation of all things for their good.

Thus, you perceive, the text asserts the doctrine of the predestination of God's people; together with its *origin* and *object*. The former is,—the divine *foreknowledge*; the latter,—*conformity to the image of His Son*; for which conformity, this reason is assigned,—*that He (the Son) might be the first-born among many brethren*. “That is (says Dr. Guise), that he might have the dignity of being the prince, ruler, and chief of a numerous family, whom he *is not ashamed to call his brethren*, Heb. ii. 11. and for whom he rose, as the first-born from the dead, Col. i. 18. that they might rise after him to glory.” 1 Cor. xv. 49.

In order to make the text as intelligible as possible, I shall further explain some terms which it employs; and then, in a few plain propositions, state and defend the doctrine which it advances. And, will you indulge me, my friends, with your unprejudiced attention to what we shall offer on the subject before us, and endeavour to do it and your *own understandings* justice by impartial consideration?—This seems a reasonable request, and surely will not be denied.

The principal terms which remain to be considered, are, *foreknowledge*, and *predestination*. By the first of these, we are not to understand *merely* the divine *prescience*: With regard to this,  
“ known



“ known unto God are *all* his works from the beginning of the world,” Acts xv. 18. But it is *a knowledge of approbation* which is here intended; or of *love and favour*. See Psa. i. 6. John x. 27. 2 Tim. ii. 19. 1 Pet. i. 2. *Predestination* is either general or particular. In the first respect it is conversant with every thing which exists. “ All beings whatever, from the highest Angel to the meanest *reptile*, and from the meanest reptile to the minutest *atom*, are the object of God’s eternal decrees and particular providence.” In the latter respect, it is (according to the definition of the Church of England) “ the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed, by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.”

Join these together, and this will be the sum total—God, *who is gracious to whom He will be gracious*, upon a comprehensive view of the apostate race of Adam, was pleased, *for the praise of the glory of His grace*, to pitch His everlasting love upon a determinate number of them, and irrevocably, and without respect to any foreseen goodness in them, sovereignly ordain and unalterably appoint them to eternal life, and all the means thereof, by his own son Christ Jesus.

Let us now consider the principal parts of this description, and the evidence by which their truth is supported from Scripture.

1. There is a predestination of a determinate number of persons to life. Thus we are informed, Mat. xx. 15. *many are called, but few*

*chosen*; that is, the gospel, *in word only*, comes to great multitudes; but *in power*, to very few; and that, as a necessary fruit of eternal choice. See 1 Thes. i. 4, 5. So also, Mat. xxiv. 22. "For the *elect*'s sake those days shall be shortened." Acts xiii. 48. "*As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*" Ver. 33 of this chapter; "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's *elect*?" Eph. i. 4, 5. "According as He hath *chosen us* in Him, *before the foundation of the world*, &c. Having *predestinated us* to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto Himself, according to the *good pleasure of his will.*" 2 Tim. i. 9. "Who hath saved us, and called us, with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His *own purpose*, and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began." 2 Thes. ii. 13. "God hath from the beginning *chosen you* to salvation." Luke x. 20. "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Compare Rev. xiii. 8. Rom. ix. 23.—"*Vessels of mercy—fore-prepared unto glory.*" Rom. xi. 4, 7. "The *election* hath obtained. There is a *remnant* according to the *election of grace.*" 1 Thes. v. 9. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation," &c. &c.

2. God's predestination of His people to eternal life, was not for any foreseen goodness in them; but *solely, according to the good pleasure of His own will*, Eph. i. 5. Hence, the text informs us, that God predestinated His people *to be*, not because He foresaw they *would be*, conformed to the image of His Son. Were election suspended on any foreseen works of faith, repentance, &c. the doctrine of the Apostle could

not

not be true, who expressly informs us, Rom. ix. 11. that election is *not of works, but of Him that calleth*; and that it took place *before* the persons concerned had *done either good or evil*. We are chosen that we *might be* holy, not because it was foreseen we *would be* so, Eph. i. 4. To maintain the reverse is to *make the effect antecedent to the cause*, which is absurd. The apostle Peter styles the people of God, “*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience,*” 1 Pet. i. 2. They are not chosen *because* obedient, but *unto* obedience. In short, were faith or works the cause of election, God could not so properly be said to chuse *us*, as we to chuse *Him*, which is quite opposite to the plainest scriptures, John xv. 16. 1 John iv. 10, 19. In a word, the elect are *freely loved*, Hos. xiv. 4.—*freely chosen*, Rom. xi. 5, 6.—*freely redeemed*, Isa. lii. 3.—*freely called*, 2 Tim. i. 9.—*freely justified*, Rom. iii. 24.—and shall be *freely glorified*, Rom. vi. 23. “I could never” (says the great Augustine) “have asserted, that God, in chusing men to life, had any respect to their faith, had I duly considered that faith itself is His own gift.”

3. God has as much predestinated His people to *faith* and *holiness* as the *means*, as He hath to eternal life as the *end*. Though faith and holiness are not represented as the *cause wherefore* the elect are saved, yet they are constantly represented as the means through which they are saved, or, as the appointed *way* whereby God leads His people to glory. These graces are therefore the objects of God’s decrees, as well as eternal life. Acts xiii. 48. “As many as were



ordained to eternal life, *believed*. He hath chosen us, &c. that we *should be holy*, Eph. i. 4. God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through *sanctification* of the Spirit, and *belief* of the truth, 2 Thes. ii. 13. Elect, through sanctification of the Spirit, *unto* obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 2. "Predestinated," says our text, "to be *conformed* to the *image* of His Son;" comprising holiness and happiness.

From the preceding observations, the final salvation of God's elect is *absolutely certain*, and far from being precarious, as it necessarily would be on any *other* system. See Psa. ciii. 17. and cxxv. 1, 2.—Isa. xlv. 17. and lv. 9, 10.—Jer. xxxi. 8. and xxxii. 40.—John vi. 39, and x. 28, 29. and xiv. 19. and xvii. 12.—Rom. xi. 29.—1 Cor. i. 8, 9.—Phil. i. 6.—1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

The doctrine which we have advanced, is so admirably calculated to humble the pride of man, and ascribe *all* the glory of his salvation to God; that we wonder not at all at the opposition made to it by the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. I know not of any objections made to this doctrine but which may be traced up to either *ignorance*, or *pride*, or a compound of both, forming the very essence of *prejudice*. Though the grace of God alone can produce a cordial reception of this doctrine; yet ought we not to decline our efforts to remove objections against it.—We shall attempt a reply to the most popular.

1. "This doctrine is very discouraging"—To whom? Whether this doctrine is true or false, if you are *ungodly* characters, you are not entitled to

## PRIVILEGES, AND OBLIGATIONS.

to religious encouragement. And if you are either *godly*, or *sincerely desirous to be so*, no doctrine in the Bible ought to be more encouraging to you, for these are happy evidences of interest in it. The 17th Article of the Church of England well observes, “That this doctrine is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to *godly* persons, and such as *feel* in themselves the *working of the Spirit of Christ*.”

2. “It tends to drive to despair.” How is this possible, unless persons could be previously assured of their being of the number of the *non-elect*? Had any persons *such* assurance, I should not wonder at their falling into despair and distraction both. But I affirm that this assurance is impossible. Previous to conversion, no man can be assured either of his *election* or *rejection*; and he has as much reason to hope the former, as to dread the latter. What is he then to do? — *Make his calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. that is, attend to what is plainly revealed; in the persevering use of appointed means, seek for mercy and salvation through the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer; when blessed with the possession of these,—he will be fully authorised to rejoice in the doctrine of God’s eternal choice. As for those who live and *die unconverted*, whether our doctrine is true or not, damnation will be their portion.

3. “This doctrine supersedes the use of means.” Does it? What, after we have maintained that God has decreed the *means*, as well as the *end*? God decreed the recovery of Hezekiah and the preservation of Paul, but

His decree did not supersede the use of means in either. See Isa. xxxviii. 21. Acts xxvii. 31.

4. "It encourages licentiousness." This objection is as sagacious as the former. God hath decreed His people to *holiness* as well as happiness; and therefore his decree encourages *sin*! God hath predestinated His people to be conformed to *Christ*, and therefore they may be conformed to the *world*!—Such nonsense deserves not a serious refutation.

5. "It makes God partial and unjust."—*He that reproveth God, let him answer it, Job xl. 2. "Who art THOU, O man! that repliest against GOD?" Rom. ix. 20.* No decree in God is, or can be, the *cause* of any man's condemnation; for as God never condemned or punished any man but for *sin*, so also He never decreed to punish any but for their transgressions. If it be *right* for God to punish for sin, it could not be *wrong* for Him to will or decree so to do: For it cannot possibly be wrong to determine to do what is right.—My prescribed limits prevent enlargement.—May God establish His own people in the truth, and fill them with joy and peace in believing!

Ver. 30.

*Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called—*

**I**N this verse, the Apostle presents us with what has often been called—the golden chain of salvation. The links of this chain are *so* united,



united, that it is impossible to separate them. God, as the *God of order*, hath adopted a divine plan, by which he bringeth his many sons unto glory. The parts which constitute this plan, have a mutual relation to, and a correlative dependance upon each other, giving symmetry and strength to the whole. Thus the text informs us, that the salvation of sinners originates in divine *predestination*, flows on in *effectual calling* and free *justification*; and finally terminates in everlasting *glory*.

The *first* of these links has been considered. We now proceed to consider the *second*, which is—*effectual calling*. This is inseparably connected with the first. “All that the Father giveth me,” saith Christ, “*shall come to me*, John vi. 37. Other sheep I have; *them also I must bring*, and they *shall hear my voice*, John x. 16. Knowing, brethren beloved, your *election* of God; FOR our gospel came not unto you in *word only*, but also in *power*, &c. 1 Thes. i. 4, 5. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the *truth*; whereunto he *called* you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 2 Thes. ii. 14, 15. Thus (as the seventeenth article of the Church of England expresses it), “they who are indued with so excellent a benefit of God,” (as to be *elected* by Him to eternal life) “are *called* in due time by his Spirit working in them; and they, *through grace*, obey the calling.” Let us consider the *nature*, *efficacy*, and *properties* of this calling.

I. The *nature* of this calling may be said to consist in the transition of a sinner from the state of nature, to that of grace. The former is a state of the grossest ignorance of true religion, joined with infidelity and hardness of heart; whence originate prejudice and practical rebellion against God, and against both his law and his gospel. The latter is a state of right and increasing knowledge of divine objects; the belief of, and a cordial acquiescence in, divine truth; together with a voluntary surrender of the whole person, body, soul, and spirit, to be ever employed for the honour and glory of God. By effectual calling, sinners are brought into this state. They are called out of *darkness* into marvellous *light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shining into their hearts, and imparting the light of the knowledge of His glory, 2 Cor. iv. 6.; so that they who were once darkness itself, become light in the Lord, Eph. v. 8. The stony heart is taken away, and one susceptible of religious impressions is produced, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Convinced of sin and misery, enlightened to perceive the glory and excellency of the dear Redeemer and his salvation; the soul is charmed with the discovery, and cheerfully relinquishes every refuge of lies to build its immortal hopes on the foundation which God hath laid in Zion. *Sin* now becomes the object of inexpressible aversion, and *holiness* that of intense desire; nor can it be otherwise, for the beloved of God are *called to be saints*, Rom. i. 7.

Divines usually, and I believe very properly, distinguish between the *external* and the *internal* call

call of the gospel. The *former* is that which is indiscriminately addressed to all the hearers of the divine word, by which they are invited no longer to “spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not; but to hearken diligently unto Him who calls to eat that which is good, and to delight in spiritual fatness,” which the gospel has prepared for every “longing appetite,” Isa. lv. 2. The *latter* imports, that gracious power which accompanies the former to the hearts of God’s elect, whereby they cheerfully obey the divine invitation. The *external* call will never prove sufficient for the conversion of a sinner, unaccompanied by that which is *internal*. This remark leads us to consider,

II. The *efficacy* of the calling mentioned in our text—“then HE also called,” &c. Efforts *merely human* will for ever prove insufficient to bring sinners savingly to Christ; for “*no man*,” saith he, “*can come unto me, except the FATHER who hath sent me draw him.*” Neither *judgments, mercies, moral swasion*, nor any species of *eloquence or argument*, can accomplish a divorce from sin, and a cordial application to Christ as the only saviour. All have been tried, and upon trial all have proved abortive.—It is very proper to use these means, because God ordinarily operates in the use of them; but unless he *does* operate, the use of them will avail nothing. Without the exertions of divine power, the gospel report will not be believed, Isa. liii. 1.; but ministers will labour in vain and spend their strength for nought. *Paul* may plant, and *Apollos* water, but GOD only can give the increase,



crease, 1 Cor. iii. 6. and make us to differ, 1 Cor. iv. 7.

Additional evidence of this will appear if we consider the *scripture account* of the *work itself*. The Apostle informs us, "if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*," 2 Cor. v. 17.—that "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a *new creature*," Gal. vi. 15. That we are, as believers, "GOD's *workmanship*," &c. Eph. ii. 10.—Now, either the metaphor of creation is improperly chosen, and erroneously applied; or it must be admitted, that the new creature is as much the production of Almighty power, as creation or the producing of all things out of nothing. It is also called a *quickening*, and a raising from the death of trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1, 5.—and is asserted to be the effect of "God's mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead," Eph. i. 18, 19.—"A being born, not of blood," or natural descent, "nor of the will of the flesh," or inclinations of corrupt nature, "nor of the will of man," or human power and moral swasion, "but of God," and of God *only*, John i. 13. With regard to,

III. The *properties* of this calling, it is termed—a *high calling*, Phil. iii. 14. The most high God is the author of it, and His calling efficaciously inclines the minds of his people to high and sublime objects. While the grovelling minds of others seem to inherit the serpent's curse, and feed on dust, Gen. iii. 14.—real believers possess an elevation of disposition and desire becoming their heavenly origin as born from above, John iii. 3. It is a *holy calling*, 2 Tim. i. 9. being

ing effected by holy means, the word and spirit of God, and one by which the people of God become partakers of his holiness, and are powerfully inclined, ardently to pursue that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. 'Tis a *heavenly calling*, Heb. iii. 1. as originating from, and tending to heaven; and may be considered as a repetition of the voice heard by St. John from heaven—*come up hither*, Rev. iv. 1. Cheerfully, through divine grace, does the christian obey the heavenly calling, and looks for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, Heb. xi. 10. This call is—*gratuitous* or infinitely *free*. “He hath saved us,” saith the Apostle, “and called us with an holy calling, *not according to our works*, but according to his *own purpose* and *grace* which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” 2 Tim. i. 9. and Gal. i. 15. The truth of this is obvious from the description given of many of the persons whom God hath chosen. Not many of the *wise*, *mighty*, and *noble*; these are set in *slippery places*, and have their portion *in this life*; but the *foolish*, *weak*, *base*, and *despised*, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. And thus he proceeds for this important reason—“that no flesh should glory in his presence,” 1 Cor. i. 26—29. The last property of this calling which I shall now observe, is, that it is—*irrevocable*;—“the *gifts* and *calling* of God are *without repentance*.” Effectual calling is a link indissolubly united to the rest of the chain. It is a necessary fruit of God’s eternal choice; and a sure fore-runner and earnest of everlasting glory.

From the preceding remarks we may perceive the error of those who imagine, that it is in their *own power* to return to God when they please. This imagination manifestly contradicts the clearest and most decided testimonies of the word of God, as well as the uniform experience of all his children; who, with regard to the honour of being made to differ from others, can with the greatest harmony cry, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto THY name be the glory!" With regard to the objections drawn from the exhortations, invitations, &c. addressed in the Bible to unconverted sinners; we answer in general, that these are representations of their *duty*, not of their *strength*; declarative of God's *authority*, not of sinners' *power* or ability. Nor should any object to the *proper use* of these exhortations, invitations, &c. because (as we have already observed) *by* such use of them, God ordinarily operates and effectually calls from among men, those whom he hath chosen.

Hence also we may infer the impossibility of successfully resisting or of frustrating the grace of God in conversion. When God works, who can let? His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. By his glorious gospel, he demolishes Satan's strong holds, casts down carnal reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5. Can it be reasonably supposed that God's gracious designs, and the efficacy and intent of shedding his Son's blood, could be all defeated by the sinner's perverse opposition and enmity?

Impossi-



Impossible! Elect sinners *shall be made willing* in the day of divine *power*, Ps. cx. 3.—and *shall come*, by alluring and efficacious influence, to him who will in no wise cast them out, John vi. 37.

Forget not, I intreat you, the important difference subsisting between the call of men, and that of God. *Externally* many are called; but, oh sinners! this is not sufficient for your salvation. Unless the almighty grace of God apply the word to your *hearts*, you will be nothing the better for its being sounded in your *ears*. Learn hence to pray God to bless his word for your spiritual profit every time you either read or hear it. With Ephraim, cry to God—"Turn *THOU* me, and I *shall* be turned." Jer. xxxi. 18. And as this *must* be done, or you are for ever undone, rest not satisfied nor discontinue your cries till they are graciously regarded, and your souls happily blessed with true religion. Thus then obey divine authority, and make your *calling sure*, and the certainty of your *election* will follow of course, 2 Pet. i. 10.

And, O that ye who are called to God's kingdom and glory, may prove your heavenly calling by your pious lives; and rejoice in your exalted privilege. Implore a suitable sense of your infinite obligations, and never forget that your effectual calling secures your final salvation, and the Lord will preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever, amen! 2 Tim. iv. 18.

Ver. 30.

—and whom he called, them he also JUSTIFIED—

IN close connexion with effectual calling, is justification. This is a subject of singular importance. “The doctrine of justification,” says the celebrated Witſius, “spreads itself through the whole system of divinity; and as the foundation is either solidly or superficially laid, the whole building rises firm and graceful, or being badly founded, threatens an opprobrious fall.”—I shall endeavour to explain its nature as clearly, and defend its truth as forcibly, as I can; humbly intreating the Divine Spirit of truth to aid my feeble efforts.

Besides that justification intended in the text, the scripture makes mention of two others, of which it may be proper, for the sake of elucidation, to take some brief notice. The first of these is *comparative*. Thus we are informed, Jer. iii. 11. that “backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.” That is, in her conduct, Israel was much less criminal than the prevaricating and dissembling Judah. With the same signification, perhaps, our Lord informs us, Luke xviii. 14. that the publican “went down to his house justified rather than the other.” The second is *declarative*: And imports the *proving* of any one to be *just* by proper evidence. In this sense we are to understand the doctrine of our Lord, Matt. xii. 37. “By thy words thou shalt be justified,

*justified*, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." That is, "Your words, as well as actions, shall be produced in *evidence* for or against you, to *prove*, whether you are a *saint* or a *sinner*, a true believer or not." *Declaratively*, God is said to be "*justified* when he speaketh," Psa. li. 4. and "wisdom also of all her children," Matt. xi. 19.

I now proceed to consider the *nature*, *cause*, and *consequence* of the justification intended in the text.

I. Its *nature*. It consists in God's gracious imputation of the blood and obedience of Christ for pardon and acceptance. According to this definition it comprises *two* things;—*pardon* and *acceptance*. These originate from distinct sources;—the precious *blood* and perfect *obedience* of our blessed Lord; and become effectual for the believing sinner's everlasting salvation, by God's gracious imputation of both. We shall briefly consider each of these subjects, after having, in a few instances, pointed out the difference between justification and sanctification.

These are, by Papists, confounded together, and the glory of both materially obscured. They are, however, very *distinguishable*, though never to be *divided*. Justification is a change of *state*; sanctification of *heart*. The former flows from the *obedience* of Christ; the latter from the *spirit* of Christ. The first gives us a *title*, the second a *meetness* for heaven. By the one we are brought *near* to God; by the other made *like* to him. Justification is by *imputation*; sanctification by *implantation*. The first takes away the



the *guilt* of sin; the second its *pollution*. By the one we are *accepted*; by the other *acceptable*. The former is *instantaneous*; the latter *progressive*. Justification is an act of God *without us*, sanctification is an operation of His blessed spirit *within us*. I shall only add, that the first is *perfect* and *equal* in all believers the very moment of its commencement; whereas the last is *imperfect*, and subsists in very *different degrees* in different persons.

The constituent parts of justification we have observed are,—*pardon* and *acceptance*. These flow from the blood and obedience of Christ. In the order of *procurement* of our salvation, the obedience of Christ necessarily preceded the shedding of His blood; but in the order of *application*, the benefits of His death are bestowed previously to those of this life. The *latter* order is that which we shall follow, and begin with,

1. The *pardon* of sin. By this we mean, God's gracious acquittance of a penitent believing sinner, from the guilt, or obligation to the punishment of sin, on the account of the all-sufficient satisfaction of Christ.

Naturally, all men are under the condemnation of God's holy law, "for all have sinned and come short of His glory; and we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world be found guilty before God," Rom. iii. 23. 19.—In the infinite riches of his mercy, God purposed, and from the depth of His wisdom, planned a way, by which justice might be glorified in the *punishment*,

*nishment*, and mercy exalted in the *pardon* of sin. This was by "setting forth His own Son as a propitiation, that sinners might find redemption in His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Rom. iii. 25.—Eph. i. 7. To the Son it was proposed, "If he would make His soul an offering for sin, He should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," Isa. liii. 10, 11.—Gladly did he accept the proposal. "Lo! I come to do thy will," Heb. x. 7. God "lays *on him* the iniquities of us all, Isa. liii. 6. He is made sin *for us* who knew no sin, 2 Cor. v. 21. and suffers the just *for* the unjust, to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. He was wounded *for our* transgressions, and bruised *for our* iniquities, Isa. liii. 4, 5. His life He laid down *for* the sheep, John x. 15. as a *ransom for many*, Matt. xxiii. 28. and by one offering hath perfected for ever, them that are sanctified," Heb. x. 14. Justification includes, not only *pardon*, but

2. *Acceptance*. Among men, a criminal may be pardoned, but neither declared righteous nor received into favour. But all whom our gracious God pardons, he accounteth righteous, and freely admits to his eternal favour and love.

The foundation of this acceptance is the possession of a perfect righteousness. As Christ, by divine appointment and voluntary engagement, became our sin-atonement High Priest; so also our law-fulfilling Righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6. As our second Adam and covenant head, He was "made under the law," Gal. iv. 4.—not only obnoxious to its *penalties*; but under  
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indispensable obligation "to fulfil all *righteousness*." All righteousness he *perfectly* fulfilled, and the important end of *His* fulfilment was *our* justification. He came under the obligation of the covenant of works, as *our Representative*, and on this account, his obedience becomes transferable to us, and justification is actually transferred. "In the Lord," and in the Lord alone, "shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and saved with an everlasting salvation. This shall ever be their solemn avowal—in the Lord have we righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 25. 17. 24. The divine Spirit teaches all the subjects of his influences to *desire* with the *Apostle* to be found in the Redeemer and invested with *His* righteousness, Phil. iii. 9. and to *rejoice* with the *Prophet* when their desire is accomplished, Isa. lxi. 10. The preceding benefits resulting from the blood and obedience of Christ become the believing sinner's, by,

3. God's gracious *imputation* of both. By imputation we mean God's placing *to our account*, the atonement and righteousness of his dear Son, and thus rendering them perfectly available for our complete and everlasting salvation. A mutual transfer is made of the sins of God's elect to Christ, and of his righteousness to them, 2 Cor. v. 21. If the Lord had not "laid upon Him the iniquity of us all," and reckoned his righteousness ours, Jesus could not have been justly punished, nor we pronounced just; "for he that justifieth the wicked, and condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination unto the Lord," Prov. xvii. 15. But by the above mutual transfer, "God appears just, in justifying



ing and saving him who believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 26.—Isa. xlv. 21. "David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God *imputeth righteousness without works*, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.—Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8.—With regard to,

II. The *cause* of justification, it is obvious from what has been already observed, that God, blessed for ever, is the *efficient* cause.—He only can irrevocably, and with just authority, as the Law-giver to whom the debt of suffering and of obedience was owing, legally discharge the principal debtor from the obligation of payment, in consequence of having received it from a surety for him. Besides the efficient cause, divines usually take notice of the *impulsive* and *instrumental* causes.

By the *first* is meant, the sovereignly free and rich *grace* of God. "God justifieth *freely* by his *grace*," Rom. iii. 24.—Tit. iii. 7. One of these terms might have been thought sufficient to have proved this truth; but the more effectually to confront that legal pride which ambitiously aspires to a share of the honour of justification, and to prevent the possibility of mistake, the term is redoubled to teach us the reality and importance of this truth. "To him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt, Rom. iv. 4. And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace, Rom. xi. 6. By grace are we saved through faith," Eph. ii. 8.—2 Tim. i. 9. And this perfectly corresponds with the great design  
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of God—"the praise of the glory of His grace," Eph. i. 6. and the total "exclusion of boasting," Rom. iii. 27.

By the *second* of the above causes is meant—*divine faith*. God justifieth *by* faith as the *instrument* by which we receive Christ and enjoy His salvation, Rom. v. 1. Not the *act*, but the *object* of faith justifies. The believer is justified *by* faith, in the same sense in which Esau was to live *by* his sword, Gen. xxvii. 40. or as a man might be said to have lived *by* his hands. That is, they lived on what was *procured by these means*. Salvation is "of faith, that it might be by grace, and the promise sure to all the seed," Rom. iv. 16.; but this could not be true if faith itself, and not its object, were the ground of our salvation.—I proceed to consider,

III. The *consequence* or fruit of justification. We thereby "become heirs according to the hope of eternal life," Tit. iii. 7.

A right to eternal life results from perfect obedience, according to the legal constitution. Christ being our representative, in obeying the law, His obedience is considered as ours, and hence we become entitled to life, no less than if we had obeyed in our own persons. The contrast formed by the Apostle in the 5th chapter of this epistle, between the effects of Adam's disobedience, and the obedience of Christ, further confirms this truth, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin"—not as a *mean of conveyance*, but as a *procuring cause*. Adam sinning as the representative head of men, they thus became sinners, "and judgment came upon them to condemnation." Now, as death reigns

reigns through Adam's sin, so the "grace of God reigns unto life through the righteousness of Christ," ver. 18.—not as a mean of conveyance, but as a procuring cause. Hence the hope of eternal life is called the *hope of righteousness*, Gal. v. 5. and the crown of immortal glory is "a crown of righteousness," given by the Lord as a "righteous judge," 2 Tim. iv. 8. "Our right to glory through the obedience of Christ as a meritorious cause," says the judicious Brine, "is the contrivance of immense wisdom, it is the design of sovereign grace, and perfectly corresponds with infinite justice. What a solid basis is this for the faith and hope of the saints!"

From the preceding observations, who can help lamenting *the fatal error* of those who laboriously but vainly attempt to establish a righteousness of their own, and refuse submission to the righteousness of God? O sirs, be assured, that except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. Remember the fate of him who had not the wedding garment, and beg of God to bring near his righteousness, and give you divine faith therein, Rom. i. 16.

On the above principles, we may well demand with the Apostle, "Where then is boasting? it is excluded. By what law? by the law of works? Nay," (that would never exclude boasting,) "but by the law of faith," Rom. iii. 27. All who shall enjoy eternal life, will be eternally indebted for it to the sovereign grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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How happy is the lot, and how great the security, of every true believer in Christ! "Ye are complete in him, Col. ii. 10. and justified from all things," Acts xiii. 39. Be mindful of this inestimable benefit, and embrace it by divine faith as a source of consolation and support under all distresses of conscience. Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and beware of the entangling yoke of legal bondage, Gal. v. i. Gratefully adore God for all his mercies, but especially for his dear Son, and complete redemption in him.

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Ver. 30.

—and whom he justified, them he also GLORIFIED—

WE have now arrived at the *last* link in the divine chain of salvation. In the glorification of the saints, God's gracious designs toward, and his operations in them, finally terminate. They are *chosen* to salvation, 2 Thess. ii. 13. *called* to His kingdom and glory, 1 Thess. ii. 12. *begotten again* to an inheritance incorruptible, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. *justified* in order to be glorified; *afflicted* for the working of a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory for them, 2 Cor. iv. 17. and finally, they are *kept* by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, 1 Pet. i. 5.

Before I proceed to consider the subject of glorification, I beg leave to make *two* observations.

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1. The Apostle speaks of the preceding benefits as *already done*. The terms are all, you perceive, used in what is called the *past tense*. The reason is, “because, by virtue of God’s eternal decree, there is an infallible certainty of these great effects, with respect to every appointed heir of salvation.” From the mode of expression adopted by the Apostle, some have taken occasion to assert the doctrine of personal and actual justification from eternity. “But,” —as Dr. Guise justly observes, “it can no more be inferred from hence, that they were actually and personally *justified*, than that they were actually and personally *called* and *glorified* from eternity,” which, surely, none will affirm. We believe, with the Westminster Assembly of Divines, that, “though from eternity, God *decreed* to justify all the elect, yet they are not *actually* justified, until the Spirit doth, in due time, *apply* Christ and his righteousness unto them.” I observe,

2. That there is an *apparent omission* of a very important article in the list of new covenant benefits presented to us by the Apostle. This article is—*sanctification*. Of this, I say, there is an *apparent* omission, not a *real*; for there is no doubt, but that it is included in one or other of the benefits enumerated by the Apostle. But the question here is, In *which* of these benefits is it included? Some suppose in one, others in another. For my part, I agree with those who include it under *glorification*: Believing with Dr. Watts, that “Men of grace find glory begun below,”

That glorification includes sanctification, is, at least, very probable from the consideration that the latter is sometimes described by the former. Thus we are informed, "That the King's daughter is all *glorious* within," Psa. xlv. 13. But what can be meant by this glory, but the genuine holiness of true believers? Our highest conceptions of future glory seem comprized in complete conformity to God. Now, true holiness on earth, is that conformity begun; for, "Beholding as in a glass the *glory* of the Lord, we *are* changed into the *same image*, from *glory* to *glory*, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Hence we are authorized to affirm, that the *glorification* of God's people actually begins on earth in the *sanctification* of their nature.

With regard to what now claims our principal attention,—the perfect glorification of God's people in heaven; to what has formerly been observed on this subject, we may add the following particulars as necessarily comprized therein.

1. *Perfect freedom from all sin.* Sin is the source of the christian's greatest sorrow. Often does it extort from him distressful lamentations. It is an enemy which every-where attends him. No more from *it* than from *himself* can he fly, for it *dwelleth in him*, Rom. vii. 20. But blessed be God! for the animating prospect which his gospel presents of its total destruction. Our Redeemer must reign, till this, with all his other enemies, are subdued under his feet. He has already given sure earnest of a final blow to its existence. "Our old man is crucified with him,



him, that the body of sin might be destroyed," Rom. vi. 6. As his precious blood hath fully atoned for it; so shall it at last, by his almighty grace, be fully subdued, so that it shall never, never molest his faithful followers more. Connected with this, is,

2. *Perfect holiness*; or conformity to the moral image of God. God is "glorious in holiness," Exod. xv. 11. Of this glory, he will make all his children partakers, and that in a perfect degree. The *understanding* will be perfectly enriched with divine knowledge and wisdom. O! the wonderful discoveries which will be made to it, of the mysteries of creation, providence, and grace. The dim dawn in which these are now beheld, will be swallowed up in the meridian blaze of God, our Sun, Psa. lxxxiv. 11. The *will*—often refractory now, will then run on in a line parallel to the holy will of God, and for ever acquiesce therein with supreme delight. The *affections* will be in perfect unison with the perfections of the ever-blessed God, and will for ever correspond with them in all their delightful variety. In a word, they shall be perfectly holy and without blemish, both in soul and body. Eph. v. 27. They shall also enjoy,

3. *The immediate vision of God*; or, "shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. This is the *source* of their complete conformity to him. "The pure in heart shall see God," Mat. v. 8. See him in the *works of glory*, wherein his perfections are most illustriously manifested. In the *person of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. the brightness of his glory and the express image

of his person, Heb. i. 3. and, immediately in *Himself* also, as far as it is possible for a creature to approach and see God. Hence arises,

4. *Unutterable joy.* This is the necessary result of being “presented faultless before the presence of his glory,” Jude 24. In God’s presence is fulness of joy, and pleasures for ever more at his right hand, Psa. xvi. 11. The eye hath not seen, the ear hath not heard, nor can the heart conceive, the greatness of that joy of the Lord into which the righteous shall at last enter, Matt. xxv. 21. 23. This joy will be possessed in,

5. *Delightful society with Saints and Angels.*  
The Apostle speaks of an “innumerable company of Angels, and the general assembly and church of the first born, Heb. xii. 22, 23. St. John saw in heaven, beside myriads of Angels, “a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; crying with a loud voice, Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!” Rev. vii. 9, 10. In concert with these, will the people of God bear a triumphant part, in anthems of eternal praise. Among the blissful inhabitants of heaven, “the voice of discord never rises, the whisper of suspicion never circulates. Each, happy in himself, participates in the happiness of all the rest; and by reciprocal communications of love and friendship, at once receives from and adds to the sum of general felicity.” The crowning circum-

circumstance of the happiness of the saints, is, its

6. *Eternal duration.* They shall *ever* be with the Lord, 1 Theff. iv. 17. Their crown of glory *fadeth not away*; it is *incorruptible*; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, Isa. xxxv. 11. The righteous shall enter into life *eternal*, Matt. xxv. 46. Were the possibility of a termination to the felicity of heaven to be admitted, "that ghastly thought would drink up all its joys, and quite unparadise the realms of light." But, glory for ever be ascribed to our gracious God, he hath secured eternal life to his people by irrevocable purpose and promise and indissoluble union to his dear Son.

Into the *immediate* possession of this glory, the souls of the righteous enter at *death*. Jesus, who is gone before to prepare mansions for his people, will then receive them to himself, for ever to behold his glory, John xiv. 2, 3. and xvii. 24. No sooner is the believer *absent* from the *body*, but he is *present* with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 8. He is *immediately* with Christ, which is far better than continuing here, Phil. i. 23. "This day," said our Lord to the penitent thief on the cross, "thou shalt be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43. St. John heard a voice from heaven commanding him to write, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from *henceforth*," that is, from the precise moment of dissolution: "Yea, saith the Spirit; that they may rest from their labours," Rev. xiv. 13.

At the *resurrection*, the *body* shall be a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed. The wonderful transformation which it will



undergo through the influence of Him who is able to subdue even all things to himself, will qualify it to be a suitable companion to the soul for ever. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory," 1 Cor. xv. 54. After God's public approbation of his people in the awful day of judgment, and their perfect acquittal from every charge—amid the acclamations of Angels, and with songs of triumph, they shall take eternal possession of the kingdom prepared for them from before the foundation of the world.

Omitting the consideration of some less interesting points, such as *the difference of degrees of glory*, and *the saints knowledge of each other in heaven*, &c. I would exhort you to examine, what *evidences* you possess of the future enjoyment of this glory.—Every one who hath a good hope of it, aspires after that purity of heart, which is necessary to see God, 1 John iii. 3. Mat. v. 8. In conformity unto, and fellowship with Him, glory begins in this life. These are its first fruits; without which, in vain do you hope for the future harvest.

Such who possess a good hope of this, should contrast the magnitude and excellency of its object to the troubles and trifles of this life; with becoming dignity despising the latter, Heb. xi. 24. 26. and with patience and fortitude supporting the former, Heb. x. 34.

Lastly, let this hope be cheerfully indulged, and learn to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, Rom. viii. 2. As a suitable incentive for fervent gratitude towards him by whom life  
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and immortality are brought to light, frequently survey your reversionary inheritance as represented in scripture. Finally, my brethren, be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

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Ver. 31.

*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

THE Apostle having arrived at the summit of divine blessings, makes a pause, and looks around him. Wherever he turns his eyes, the most pleasing prospects appear. If he look *below*, he recollects, there is *no condemnation*. If *around*, he perceives the hand of God, through the intervention of second causes, making *all things co-operate for good*. And when he directs his view *upward*, there he beholds a gracious Father, a kind Intercessor, and a sanctifying Comforter. The heavenly mansions, in all their glory, appear in view, as the sure reversionary inheritance of the people of God.—Charmed with the survey he takes of these objects, and overwhelmed with grateful astonishment, he cries out, “What shall we say to these things!” What tongue can express, what heart can adequately conceive the stupendous greatness of that love which pours forth these blessings, with a profusion truly divine! “What can we wish for

more, to encourage our patience and hope, and to support, comfort, and secure us under all our troubles?" Seeing the ever-blessed God himself, is for, and with us, as our faithful and unchangeable Friend, who, to any effectual purpose can possibly be against us? Surely none!

*Sin*, and the *cross*, or afflictions, are the principal enemies whom the Apostle combats in this chapter. To the *former*, he opposes the atonement, righteousness, and grace of the almighty Redeemer; by which, believers are not only freed from the guilt and dominion of sin; but have a right conferred, and a growing meetness for eternal life produced. To the *latter*, he opposes the gracious designs of God, who renders them subservient to the purposes of his own glory, and the moral improvement of his people. After having *warred a good warfare* against these enemies—conscious of the infallible certainty of final complete victory, he proceeds, in the remaining part of the chapter, to triumph over them.

To the Apostle's triumph, our text is an introduction. It is composed of two interrogatories. In addition to what has already been observed, the first may be called, a *demand* for serious consideration. "What shall we say to these things? Are they not indisputably true, great, and excellent? Have we faith and delight in them as such?—Whenever we hear truths of importance, we should ask ourselves this, or some similar question: What, upon reflection, can we think or say to these things? What interest have we in them? What moral use do we make of them? This is a way to profit by what we hear.

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The second interrogatory may be called a *challenge*. In which we may observe its foundation—"God is for us." The inference thence drawn—"who can be against us." Let us consider both these.

I. The *foundation* of this challenge. "God is for us," we render it, "*If* God be for us;" rather it ought to be read, "*Seeing* God is for us," the Continuator of Mr. Poole justly observing, that, "it is a note of *certainty*, not of *ambiguity*. The Apostle takes it for granted as that which cannot be denied."

God's being *for* his people, is expressive of his infinite and immutable regard towards them; and the fruits of that regard in the acts and operations of his grace and providence. He loves his people with an everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3. They are infinitely dear to him, being the purchase of his Son's precious blood, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Isa. xliii. 4. They are his jewels, Mal. iii. 17. His peculiar treasure, Ps. cxxxv. 4. Whom he preserveth as the apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8. and keeps night and day, Isa. xxvii. 3. With respect to this peculiar regard, God may, with great propriety, be said to be *for* his people, being wholly on their side, as their King and Captain, Micah ii. 15. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12. and, consequently, an enemy unto their enemies, and an adversary unto their adversaries, Exod. xxiii. 22.

The boundless favour of God towards his people is manifested in the acts and operations of his grace and of his providence. On those of his *grace* principally, does the Apostle found his proof that God is for us. He hath predestinated, effectually called, justified, and will

finally glorify us. On all which accounts, we may rest assured that God is for us, and will be with us. Equally obvious is this encouraging truth, from the administration of *divine providence*. God being for his people, all his *providential dispensations* are for them also. Beautiful specimens are exhibited to us in scripture of God's gracious espousal of the cause of his people. Had not God been for Joseph, how could the evil meant by his unnatural brethren, and lascivious mistress, have been counteracted and rendered productive of eventual good? See Gen. l. 20. When *Moses* was insulted, and *Job* cruelly slandered, the former by his own relatives, the latter by pretended friends, how speedily did God appear for them and vindicate their cause! See Num. xii. and Job xlii. 7. Before *Nero*, no man stood with *Paul*, but all men forsook him; notwithstanding the Lord stood with and for him, strengthening, and delivering him from the mouth of the lion, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. On these sure grounds, we may confidently affirm, that, "God is for us." If so, according to

II. The *inference* formed by the Apostle, "Who can be against us?" We are not from this inquiry to suppose that God's people have none who are against them. Such a supposition would be contradicted by fact and experience. Peace with God always occasions war with Sin, Satan, and the world; and, to allude to Exod. viii. 26. "shall we sacrifice the abominations of these Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not be ready to stone us? No sooner was a league of peace formed with Joshua by the Gibeonites; than the Canaanitish kings mustered all their forces against them. See Josh. x. The fury of  
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Nebuchadnezzar was made seven times hotter, as well as his furnace, by the bold refusal of the servants of God to worship the image which he had set up, Dan. iii. Thus, upon peaceful submission to Jesus, and disobedience to the mandates of Satan, he and his emissaries rage and conspire against the people of God. But all in vain, for, according to the *import* of the Apostle's inquiry, "If God be for us,

Who can be," *successfully* and to *purpose*, "against us?" None! If the Lord be on our side, we need not fear what man or devils can do against us. His infinite love, power, and presence secure his people from the malignant designs of every foe. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe, Prov. xviii. 10. Who is he that will harm the followers of good? 1 Pet. iii. 13. Shall *Satan*?—his head is bruised; he is a chained enemy; his power is limited, thus far and no farther shall it extend. Shall the *world*?—"Be of good cheer," saith our Lord, "I have overcome the world." And *His* victory is a sure earnest of *our* final victory over it, otherwise it could not be to *us*, a ground of good cheer. Shall *evil men*?—their breath is in their nostrils, and are nothing to be accounted of, Isa. ii. 22. The wrath of man shall contribute to the praise of God's goodness towards his people, and the remainder thereof, when no longer subservient to this design, God will restrain, Psa. lxxvi. 10. In a word, *no weapon* formed against them shall prosper, Isa. liv. 17. For the purpose of exercising the graces of God's people, their enemies are allowed a power



to *resist*, but not to *conquer* them. Be not dismayed then, O Christian! at either the malice or multitude of your enemies. "Their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us, fear them not," Num. xiv. 9.—From the preceding observations, we may infer,

1. How miserable their state is who have the awful majesty of God *against* them. This is the portion of every unconverted man and woman upon earth. "Thus saith the Lord God, behold I, even I am against thee," Ezek. v. 8. If God be against you, it matters nothing who are for you. "*Riches* profit not in the day of wrath," Prov. xi. 14. *Kings* and *conquerors*, so far from being able to succour others, will *themselves* "cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," Rev. vi. 15—17. The *face* of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them, Psa. xxxiv. 34. His *heart* and *hand* also, for "he *hateth* the workers of iniquity," Psa. v. 5. and his "*hand* will speedily take hold on judgment to render vengeance to his adversaries," Deut. xxxii. 40. Therefore, "because there is wrath, beware, lest he take thee away with his stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee," Job xxxvi. 18.

2. As God is evidently *for* his people, woe to those who are *against* them! For, "shall not God avenge the insults and hostilities committed against his own elect? Doubtless He will. and that *speedily* too, Luke xviii. 7, 8. Better were it for him who offendeth one of Christ's little ones, that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck,

neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea, Mat. xviii. 6. God ordains His arrows against the persecutors" of His people, Psa. vii. 13. The Old Testament abounds with instances of His just displeasure against their enemies. "Refrain," therefore, "from these men, and let them alone," for, "how can you curse whom God hath not cursed? or defy whom the Lord hath not defied?" Num. xxiii. 8.

Let true believers earnestly pray to be established in the present truth. It is a source of strong consolation. What can possibly discourage us while we believe that "the Lord of Hosts is with us, and that the God of Jacob is our refuge?" Psa. xlvi. 1, 2, 7. A firm persuasion of this will be productive of many beneficial effects.—It will encourage *confident application to God* in all times of danger and distress. "In the shadow of His wings shall we make our refuge until calamities be overpast," Pf. lvii. 1 — We shall thus *be preserved from the use of sinful means* to avoid apprehended evils and the most alarming threatenings. Our enemies can have no power at all against us but what is given from above, John xix. 11. And, conscious of the favour and protection of our God, we shall treat their efforts to injure us with deserved contempt. We shall neither be careful to answer them, nor be induced, through fear of their threatenings, to obey their iniquitous commands, Dan. iii. 16, 17. — In a word, we shall, in the belief of the love and almighty defence of our covenant God, enjoy His peace as passing all understanding; for he keeps their minds in perfect peace which are stayed on Him, Isa. xxvi. 3. Certain persons expressing their astonishment at  
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the security in which *Alexander* the Great took his rest, notwithstanding the multitude of enemies with which he was surrounded; his reply was, "I sleep in peace, because I know my good friend *Parmenio* watches."—Much more may the real christian lie down in peace and sleep; conscious that he is sheltered under the constant care of the Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, Psa. iv. 8. and cxxi. 4. May it please our gracious God to strengthen our confidence in him; and enable us to look forward to the possible vicissitudes of life, and death itself, with peace and pleasure, sensible that He is, and ever will be with us!

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Ver. 32.

*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

**I**N these words, the Apostle continues his triumph begun in the preceding verse. From the consideration of the infinite goodness and bounty of God, he appears singularly animated, and forms the most encouraging inferences from them. On the most solid grounds, he affirms that God is *for* his people, and hence defies the malice and rage of their every foe. In the text, he appeals to a distinguished fact, the most sublime and animating imaginable, as the foundation of his firm confidence concerning the liberal bestowment of every needful blessing:

"That God," saith he, "who loved his people in such an astonishing degree, that, rather than they



they should perish, spared not, but delivered up his own Son to accomplish complete redemption for them,—how unreasonable would it be to indulge, for a single moment, a suspicion of his refusing to bestow with Him any other blessing which he knows to be necessary for them! If while we were *enemies* he bestowed the greatest of all blessings upon us, can he, after having made us his *friends*, refuse to bestow such as are far inferior? Surely no!" Thus then the Apostle reasons. Inferring the less from the greater, he carefully guards us against fear, both of *enemies* and of *wants*. Against the *former* by the consideration that God is for us; against the *latter* by that of his infinite bounty in giving us His Son.

The text, you perceive, contains a proposition, and an encouraging inference. The proposition is,—“God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” The inference thence drawn is,—that “God, with his Son, will freely give us all things.” The certainty of this inference is intimated by the interrogative in which it is formed: “How shall he not?” &c. May it please God to render our contemplation of these subjects profitable!

I. The proposition. “God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” These words are expressive of the rigour with which divine justice inflicted the punishment of our sins upon the blessed Redeemer, considered as our Surety. This rigour is expressed,

1. *Negatively*, “He spared him not.” “He did not favour or abate Him in any thing that in law and justice was due to us for our iniquities, and was necessary to be suffered in order to  
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our redemption." He was not spared, either with regard to *punishment itself*, the *time* or *degree* of its infliction. If he will be surety for sinners he must smart for it, Prov. xi. 15. His soul must become an offering for their sins, Isa. liii. 10. When the determined period arrived, not a moment's delay of the stroke could be procured. The bitter cup could neither pass from him, nor his drinking it postponed. Nor could any abatement be made of the degree of appointed suffering. If *Christ* had been spared, *we* could not. That he might save to the uttermost, he *suffered* to the uttermost. The sword of divine justice was aroused to strike the dreadful blow, fully and effectually, Zech. xiii. 7. "He seized our dreadful right," and God spared Him no more than he will spare those who live and die incorrigible. On the contrary, He,

2. *Positively* "delivered him up." Delivered him freely and of his own accord to bear our sins, and to die in our room and stead, as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins. Thus was he delivered for our offences, Rom. iv. 25. *Judas, Pontius Pilate, Herod*, and the Jews, could have had no power at all against our blessed Redeemer, except it had been given them from above, in consequence of his sustaining the character of our *Surety*. Jesus being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, with wicked hands they took, crucified, and slew him, Acts ii. 23. Their power originated in God's assumption and exercise of the characters of Judge and Punisher of sin, and as such, delivering up the blessed Jesus as our Redeemer to  
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their infernal malice, and the infliction of his own vengeance upon sin.

This singular act is magnified by the incomparable *worth* and *excellency* of the person who was delivered up.—*His own Son*. This relation is expressive of the equality of nature, and the infinitude of love subsisting between the Father and Son. No relation in nature, so near or so dear as this. How wonderful, how stupendous then must be the love of God in delivering up his own Son for the accomplishment of redemption for guilty polluted sinners!—A very worthy friend lately informed me, that the ingenious Bishop Warburton supposed that the extreme curiosity of Abraham to know how salvation was to be accomplished by the predicted Messiah, occasioned that singular command which required him to offer up his beloved Isaac for a burnt offering, Gen. xxii. 1, 2. as being the liveliest emblem of the amazing love of God in delivering up his own Son, and to shew, that, by *His* death, sinners were to obtain eternal life. All ages have stood astonished at the strength of that love and regard to God and his authority, which, in Abraham, completely conquered the most powerful instinct of nature. But O! the astonishing magnitude of that love which induced the infinite Majesty of heaven actually to deliver up his own Son to *certain* death, dreadfully embittered with the tremendous curse due to the myriads of sins committed by myriads of sinners. Well may we, overwhelmed with delightful astonishment, cry out, *What manner of love is this?*

God



God is said to have delivered up his Son for *us all*. The extent of these terms "is to be determined by *the subjects* which are spoken of all along in this Discourse; and they are God's elect, whom he predestinated, called, justified, and glorified; whom God is *for* in such a manner that none can prevail against them; and to whom he freely gives all things, and makes all things work together for good; and who are more than conquerors, through Him that loved them, and never shall be separated from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, as they are described in the foregoing and following context."—Let us now proceed to consider,

II. The inference deduced by the Apostle from the preceding doctrine—"How shall he not with Him freely give us all things?" Observe here the *extent* and *force* of the inference.

1. It extends, you perceive, to *all things*, that is, to every good and perfect gift of which the great Father of lights is the ever bountiful Bestower, Jam. i. 17. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son," Rev. xxi. 17. These terms include the ever-blessed Creator himself, as well as His creatures. Every blessing suited to both the present and future state, "for godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. Every thing which is for your real advantage, God will freely bestow.—He will withhold no good thing from them who walk uprightly, Psa. lxxxiv. 11. "All things are yours," 1 Cor. iii. 21. *Ordinances,*

*dinances, providences, life, death, and a blissful immortality.* They who have found the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, shall have every other thing necessary for body and soul assuredly added, Mat. vi. 33. Doubt not these things; for,

2. The *force* of the Apostle's inference is great, as is obviously intimated by the interrogative in which he forms it, "How shall He not," &c. How can it be otherwise, seeing he did not consider His *own Son* as a gift too great to grant us? This was the greatest proof that ever could be conceived of God's stupendous love. "He *so* loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. Herein is love, great indeed, beyond conception! And can that love which bestowed a gift so great, refuse any other which is requisite for us either for time or for eternity? Is it possible that inferior blessings should be denied, after the greatest of all has been freely bestowed? In great mercy God may deny you many things of which you would wish to be possessed, but nothing will be withheld from you which he knows to be for your good. The death of Christ has opened an honourable channel for the liberal communication of every divine blessing, which now can be conferred in perfect harmony with the honour of every divine attribute. And as our gracious God delivered up His own infinitely dear Son, to accomplish complete redemption for us, without the least desert or desire on our parts, will He, *can* He, after having reconciled us to Himself, refuse us those

those very blessings for which He Himself has caused us to pray? Impossible! surely we cannot give place for a moment to such an unreasonable supposition. O may we honour the infinite bounty of our God, by cheerfully expecting the enjoyment of every real blessing! From the preceding observations, we learn,

1. The *inflexibility of divine justice*, by the exercise of its holy rigour on the person of our Redeemer, whom it spared not. And seeing it did not, let presuming sinners tremble at the impossibility of their being spared, if they live and die destitute of interest in the atoning death of Christ. Is it not preposterous, is it not a strong symptom of infatuation, to suppose that God will spare *you*, when he spared not his *own Son*, considered as the Surety of guilty sinners? O beware of such presumption, and fly (for fly you must, or be for ever undone) to the cross of Christ, by which alone you can be secured from the stroke, ready to fall from the uplifted arm of divine vengeance. Nothing speaks such terror to incorrigible offenders, as the dreadful sufferings of Christ. In His lamentable cries in Gethsemane's garden, and on Calvary's top, you may clearly perceive it to be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. O may you take warning, and fly from the wrath to come!

2. Here may believers behold, with grateful astonishment, *the stupendous love of God* towards them; and O! may they make it the delightful theme of their daily contemplation. It was for *your* sakes, that God spared not his own Son. That your heavenly Father might spare *you*, "as  
a man



a man spareth his own son that serveth him." He spared not your dear Redeemer. The fierceness of divine wrath on Christ, made way for the fulness of divine love to you. His pain procured your ease. His stripes, your healing balm. His condemnation, your justification. His shame, your glory; and His curse, your blessing. He mourned, that you might rejoice; and was forsaken, that you might never be forsaken. In a word, out of his greatest miseries, flow your greatest mercies. O may we feel the force of our obligations, and as a testimony of our unfeigned gratitude, spare no sins, nor think any thing too good cheerfully to resign, when the glory or honour of our gracious God calls!

3. We are informed *how* divine and special blessings are *to be received*. They are all inseparably connected with the *person* of Christ, and it is *with Him* that they are freely given. "All the promises of God are yea and amen *in Him*," 2 Cor i. 20. Therefore, without a conjugal and vital union to his person, it is impossible to share in his benefits.—Seriously consider this, I beseech you, and seek for divine blessings in this way.

Lastly, let the Apostle's *principal scope in these words* be regarded by every believer.—His evident design in these words was, the production of *firm and delightful affiance in God* for every requisite blessing. He produces the most cogent argument possible for this purpose; and intimates the impossibility of a refutation of the principle on which he proceeds, by the interrogative which he employs. And shall all this labour be in vain? Shall sinful fears and doubts perplex

perplex the mind relative to present or future wants? God forbid! Endeavour, my brethren, to imitate the reasoning of the Apostle here, and be 'assured that your gracious God, who withheld not His own Son from you, "*will supply all you need according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end, Amen.*" Eph. iii. 20, 21.

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Ver. 33.

*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*

**T**HE Apostle, in these words, advances a step higher in his truly christian triumph. He assures us, not only of safety in God's protection, and of suitable supplies from his inexhaustible bounty; but also of complete security from the guilt and condemnation of sin, and of consequent everlasting acceptance with God. This is the object of every real christian's principal concern. For this, will every one that is godly pray unto God in a time when he may be found, Psa. xxxii. 6. And the text, with the verse following, affords the people of God the firmest foundation to rejoice in the certainty of their possessing this inestimable blessing.

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Our text evidently alludes to the triumphant challenge of our blessed Lord, recorded Isa. l. 8, 9. "He is near that justifieth me, who will contend with me? let us stand together; who is mine adversary; let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me, who is he that shall condemn me?" These words are considered by divines as spoken by our Lord in the character of his people's Surety, who, *as such*, became voluntarily chargeable with their guilt; and as on the account thereof he was *condemned*, so, having fully atoned for it, he was also *justified*. Of the certainty of his being so, our Lord expressed his firm confidence even when considered as standing at Pilate's bar, "having given his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and as having hid not his face from shame and spitting," ver. 6.

Thus, our blessed Lord is represented as the great Exemplar of the exercise of divine faith. As our Surety, occasion was afforded him for the exercise of faith, both for himself and for us — *For himself*. The enormous load of his people's guilt was transferred unto, and their numberless iniquities caused to meet upon him, Isa. liii. 5. And never, never was the faith of any so exercised as was His, relative to a perfect discharge. He is represented in the 22d Psalm (the whole of which it is supposed was repeated by him on the cross. Compare ver. 1. with Mat. xxvii. 46.) as exercising faith on God as his God, and as strengthening his faith by the consideration of the happy fruits of that grace in His forefathers according to the

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flesh, ver. 4, 5. And, conscious of His own infinite ability perfectly to satisfy the claims of Law and of Justice; and also of his Father's acceptance and approbation; He triumphed in certain prospect of His own justification. He exercised faith also,

*For us.* His justification was *virtually ours*, He being our Representative. Having atoned for our sins by His sufferings, and magnified the divine law by His obedience, He entrusts His heavenly Father with the infinite virtue and efficacy of both, to be dealt out by Him to His people in grace and glory in every successive period of time, until His second coming. Fully assured of His Father's fidelity to His covenant engagements, He rests in confidence of His many sons being safely brought to glory for whom he died.

The mutual trust and confidence of Father and Son in each other, ought to be improved for the purpose of encouraging and strengthening our faith. For *four thousand years* previous to the accomplishment of redemption, God *received* myriads of souls to glory upon the *credit* of His dear Son's engagement. And *from* the period of the *accomplishment* of our redemption, until the *last day*, our dear Redeemer confides in His Father and *ours*, for the *certain application* of his redemption to all for whom it was accomplished. May we hence derive encouragement to exercise that confidence which will be productive of strong consolation!

The Apostle, recollecting the preceding principles—the perfection of the Redeemer's atonement and obedience, and God's perfect acceptance

ceptance of both as adequate to the purposes of securing His own honour in the eternal salvation of His people; teaches us by His own example to *triumph in Christ*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. and hence founds the noble challenge which constitutes our text.

Justification is opposed by the Apostle to *accusation* and to *condemnation*. To the *former* in the text, to the *latter* in the verse immediately following. The reason is, because, when *accusation* is *justly* founded, it is generally succeeded by *condemnation*. To justify with regard to the *first* of these, is the act of an *Advocate*; with regard to the *second*, is the act of a *Judge*. In both respects the believer is safe. No charge, sufficient for his condemnation, can possibly be brought against him. The reasons are, *God justifieth, Christ died*.

The text is composed of a triumphant demand, and a satisfactory answer.

I. *A triumphant demand*. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" That God *hath* an *elect*, that is, a determinate number of Adam's apostate race whom he hath irrevocably ordained to eternal life, has, I hope, been sufficiently proved, on ver. 29. It is concerning these that the Apostle makes his demand, and he speaks as if he stood in the centre of heaven, earth, and hell, and after looking above, below, and around him, demands, "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"

But, what does his demand imply? Does it imply that God's elect are not *chargeable* with evil? Far from it! They are conscious of

being chargeable with innumerable evils.—With *Adam's sin*, he being the common representative of all his posterity, on which account they all sinned in him, Rom. v. 12.—With the *want of that original righteousness* with which human nature was invested in the person of Adam.—With innumerable and enormous sins *before* conversion, and alas! with many and great ones *after*. They are, moreover, chargeable with numberless sinful infirmities, which perpetually attend them even in their best and most pious moments; for “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; for there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not,” Ecc. vii. 20.

Nor does the Apostle's demand imply, that none *do* actually charge God's elect. On the contrary, they often *charge themselves* with innumerable offences of which they find themselves guilty. Frequently, with Ephraim, are they ashamed,—yea, even *confounded*, when recollecting the reproach of their youth, Jer. xxxi. 19. Too often also do they censoriously *charge one another* of inconsistencies with their christian profession. But, truly, little occasion have they thus to treat one another when we consider, that *Satan, the common accuser of the brethren*, ceaseth not to accuse them *all*, night and day, before God, Rev. xii. 10. Satan's *allies*,—*men of the world*, join their master in the honourable employ of slandering the people of God. Some maliciously accusing them of adopting sentiments inimical to civil government, because of their just disapprobation of its gross abuses. Some slandering them as using religion for a  
cloak



cloak to cover their iniquitous designs against others. And many reproach and despise them as visionary enthusiasts, and uncharitable bigots, liberally "dealing damnation round the land," on all who are not, it is said, "of *their* way of thinking."—Such groundless invectives prove nothing but the ignorance and malice of those who use them. The Apostle's demand, therefore, does not suppose that God's elect are neither chargeable nor charged with various evils, sometimes justly and sometimes unjustly; but, that *no* charge can be available to injure them, for the important reason assigned in,

II. The *substantial answer* given to his own demand:—*It is God that justifieth.* And if *He* justify, it matters nothing who either accuses or condemns.

Having presented you already with our sentiments on the important doctrine of justification, I shall at present take notice of the sufficiency only of this answer to accomplish the *end* for which it was used by the Apostle—our *encouragement* and *consolation*. The validity of the Apostle's answer to the demand he makes is obvious,

I. From the divine *Author* of justification—*God*. He is the supreme Law-giver against whom sin is committed, and *He* it is who justifies His people once for all and for ever from every charge. Justification is an immutable act of God's infinitely free grace founded on the imputation of the blood and obedience of His dear Son, infallibly securing His people unto eternal life. Hence the insufficiency of

every charge brought against them. To this consideration add,

2. The *solidity of the basis* on which the exalted privilege under consideration is *founded*;—it is founded on the blood and obedience of our almighty Redeemer, and these are of infinite and everlasting efficacy. To these, contrast every charge and every sin, and they vanish into nought. “By one offering our great High Priest hath perfected for ever them who are sanctified, Heb. x. 14. and grace triumphantly reigns, through *His* righteousness, unto eternal life,” Rom. v. 21. Additional evidence of the sufficiency of the Apostle’s answer to obviate every charge brought against God’s elect, appears,

3. From the *solemn sanction* of the *covenant engagements* subsisting between Father and Son. On the terms of Christ’s making his soul an offering for sin, and fulfilling all righteousness, God engaged by *promise* and *oath* to bring the heirs of promise through *grace* to endless *glory*, and graciously reveals the immutability of his counsel for the purpose of yielding these heirs strong consolation. Now, the *faithfulness* and *justice* of God infallibly secure everlasting salvation to every believing penitent, 1 John i. 9.—From the subject in general, we are taught,

1. That, as *God alone* can justify, and thus deliver and secure us from guilt and condemnation, we ought to apply to *HIM alone* for this inestimable blessing. While “Jews on their own law rely, and Greeks of wisdom boast;” while self-sufficient moralists erect their tottering edifice

edifice on the sand, and superstitious papists confide in the impious power arrogated by presumptuous mortals to absolve;—let every sensible and burdened conscience apply to that God *with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption*, and soon shall the blessedness of those be enjoyed *to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity*, Psa. xxxii. 1, 2.

2. With regard to the unspeakable blessing which we have been considering, he that glorieth *must glory in the Lord*, and in the Lord alone, 1 Cor. i. 31. Isa. xlv. 25. And here, indeed, is ample cause for glorying. Our God delighteth in mercy and love, and hath testified his delight in both through Christ, by acquitting *us*, who truly believe, from every charge, and accepting us to infinite and immutable favour. In these prerogatives let us rejoice, and cheerfully give the whole glory of them to the infinite riches of that grace whence they flow.

3. We are taught how to enjoy *support and consolation under every charge* and accusation which may be brought against us by our numerous enemies. To them all, let us contrast God's gracious acquittal and acceptance. As "no weapon formed against us shall prosper, so every tongue that shall rise against us in judgment shall be condemned. This is the truly excellent heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord," Isa. liv. 17.

Lastly, Let it be the daily concern of God's people to *exercise their faith on His perfect and immutable justification of them*; and endeavour to



prove the reality of their *gratitude* for a favour so divine, by their exemplary *lives* and *conversations*. We ought to be deeply humbled, and affected with godly sorrow for the small influence which God's wonderful love has upon us. May the holy Spirit enliven our faith and affections, and enable us with lively faith and fervent love to re-echo the triumphant demand of the Apostle, and to subjoin his substantial answer: *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth!*

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Ver. 34.

*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died;—*

ON the most substantial grounds does the Apostle triumph over the power of every enemy successfully to accuse or condemn the people of God. To every charge against them he had opposed in general this consideration—*God justifieth*. And, in the verse before us, he proves the impossibility of their condemnation from the indisputable evidence arising from the gracious acts of Christ, as their Mediator and Advocate. These acts are fourfold, His Death, Resurrection, Accession, and Intercession at the Father's right hand.

In the text, the Apostle refers to final and eternal condemnation in the life to come; for, with regard to the present, it is certain that God's people have often been falsely accused and unjustly condemned by *the seed of the Serpent*;

*pent*; who have not only *condemned and killed without resistance*, the bodies of *the just*, James v. 6. but, as far as lay in them, by their excommunications and anathemas, have doomed, without mercy, their *souls* to hell. But, their *condemnation* is of as little efficacy as their *absolution*. The one does no injury, the other no good.

The Apostle's answer to the demand he makes in the text, suggests the all-sufficiency of the death of Christ effectually and for ever to secure His people from condemnation.—And not only from condemnation, but from every *fear* thereof.

It is a prerogative of incomparable value to be freed, on sure and substantial grounds, from those fears. Everlasting condemnation, all men, on the account of sin, have most justly deserved. Terrifying apprehensions of falling, as guilty criminals, into the hands of the living God, have often racked the consciences of ungodly men, and distressed those of God's own people. Nor can any real security from those fears be enjoyed, but what flows through a medium which secures the honour of God in the perfect satisfaction of His divine justice. *That* alone which satisfies justice, can truly satisfy an awakened conscience; and such satisfaction is amply afforded by the death of Christ; which we now proceed to consider.

In sacred Scripture, the death of Christ is represented to us in various points of view; each of which, and all in conjunction, authorise every believer to triumph over fears of con-

demnation. The death of Christ is represented to us,

I. As a *Ransom*. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a *ransom* for many, Matt. xx. 28. Who gave himself a *ransom* for all, to be testified in due time," 1 Tim. ii. 6. "A ransom," say the learned Authors of the Encyclopædia Britannica, "is a sum of money paid for the redemption of a slave, or the liberty of a prisoner in war." Divine truths could not be understood if they were not taught in words borrowed from ideas, transactions, and institutions, common among men. Now, a ransom being given for the deliverance of a captive, the word ransom clearly expresses the chief design of Christ's obedience and sufferings, even to deliver the prisoners of divine justice from a punishment from which they could not have otherwise been delivered. Hence Christ's death is called a *price*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Ye are bought with a *price*; being redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold—but with the *precious blood of Christ*," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. And by virtue of this price, our adorable Redeemer delivers us from the wrath to come, 1 Thes. i. 10. and from all that stands connected with it, vain conversation, 1 Pet. i. 18. the world, Gal. i. 4. sin, Tit. ii. 14. and Satan, Col. i. 13, 14. The Scripture represents the death of Christ,

II. As a *Sacrifice*. "Christ our passover is *sacrificed* for us, 1 Cor. v. 7. Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,"



world," John i. 29. Do not these scriptures intimate with considerable evidence, that, as the paschal lamb was slain to preserve the Israelites from death, so Christ was sacrificed to save believers from eternal destruction? "He gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling favour," Eph. v. 2. In order to which, a body was prepared Him, Heb. x. 5. Which body, meaning his whole human nature, (for His *Soul* also was made an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10.) He offered up to God, Heb. x. 10 and that most willingly and readily, God's law being written on his heart, Psa. xl. 8.

"The prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices throughout the earth," says an eloquent Author, "proclaims it to be the general sense of mankind, that mere repentance was not of sufficient avail to expiate sin, or to stop its penal effects. By the constant allusions which are carried on in the New Testament, to the sacrifices under the law, pre-signifying a great atonement made by Christ, and by the strong expressions which are used in describing the effects of his death, the sacred writers shew, as plainly as language allows, that there was an efficacy in his sufferings, far beyond that of mere example and instruction.—We discern in this plan of redemption, the evil of sin strongly exhibited, and the justice of the divine government awfully exemplified in Christ suffering for sinners."

The proper effect of the sacrifice of Christ, was atonement and reconciliation. Sin broke the friendship which originally subsisted between

God and man, and hid his face from us, *Isa. lix. 2.* Naturally we are under His wrath, which abideth on every unbeliever, *John iii. 36.* and nothing could free us from it, but the death of Christ; and this it hath amply done. Glory for ever be ascribed to the blessed Name of our Jesus! He "was cut off, but *not for Himself,*" but for *us*, "that we who were enemies, might be reconciled to God," *Rom. v. 10.* God, now, through the death of His Son, appears a reconciled God, and, as "reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," *2 Cor. v. 18, 19.* An additional view given us of the death of Christ, is that of,

III. *A punishment in our stead.* "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement" which procured "our peace was upon him, and with his stripes, we are healed, *Isa. liii. v.* Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," *1 Pet. iii. 18.*

Christ's sufferings were *punishment*; real proper punishment. But as an *innocent* person, He could not be punished without bearing *sin*; the very sin of others. This He did, and, as a divine Person, bore it perfectly away, so that it is not possible, that *they* should ever perish for whom He died. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, and hath fully atoned for it. The result of which is satisfaction and acquittal.

Though the *term* satisfaction occurs not in scripture, the *thing* signified by it often does. This is generally expressed by *reconciliation*, as the

the necessary fruit of the infliction of the punishment which we had deserved upon Christ. See Rom. v. 10. 2 Cor. v. 19. Heb. ii. 17. His sufferings procured forgiveness, but surely not for Himself, who needed it not, but for *others*; but those others they could not profit were they not placed to their account. But to the account of God's elect they are happily placed, so that they find redemption in Christ's blood, the complete and everlasting forgiveness of their sins, Eph. i. 7.

The infinite dignity of the *Person* of the Redeemer, rendered his death perfectly available for the accomplishment of the ends for which He died. These were the glory of God, Isa. xlix. 3. and our pardon, Rom. iii. 25. purity, Heb. xiii. 12. and peace, Col. i. 20.

With regard to the *extent* of the death of Christ, I beg leave to introduce the words of the justly famous Dr. Owen: "I propose, to the *Universalists*, this dilemma. The Father imposed his wrath, due unto, and Christ underwent punishment for, either *all* the sins of *all* men; or, *all* the sins of *some* men; or, *some* sins of *all* men. If the *last*, then all men have some sins to answer for; and so no man shall be saved. If the *second* (which is the proposition we lay down as truth), then Christ in their stead, suffered for all the sins of all the elect in the whole world. If the *first*, Why are not all freed from the punishment due unto their sins?—You answer, "Because of their unbelief." I ask, Is this unbelief a sin or not? If not, why should they be punished for it? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or



He did not.—If He did, why must that hinder them, more than their other sins for which He died? If He did not, then He did not die for all their sins. Let them (that is, the Arminians) take which part they please.”—From the subject, learn,

1. The *dreadful nature of sin*, which required such an astonishing sacrifice for its expiation. Of all the discoveries which God ever made of the impossibility of passing by sin with impunity, none is comparable to that made us by the death of His own Son. Consequently,

2. The *folly and danger of presumptuous sinners is great*. Nothing speaks such terror to those of you who answer this description, as the death of Christ. In it, you may clearly perceive the impossibility of either escaping, or of being able to sustain, the awful vengeance of almighty God, if you live and die impenitent. May the consideration of this have proper effect, and induce you earnestly to apply to the Redeemer for faith in His atoning blood as your only security. Let me,

3. Exhort all who make profession of religion, to use *impartial examination concerning their interest in the death of Christ*. The only evidence to be depended on in this inquiry, is the *enjoyment* of the *fruits* of His death. These, it has been observed, are, pardon, purity, and peace. Have you then, my friends, ever experienced a pleasurable sense of the forgiving love of God through Christ? Has this sense been accompanied with sanctifying influence, purifying the heart, and exciting you to love God, and live to His glory? Has His peace pos-

possessed your consciences and kept your hearts faithful and affectionate towards Him? If so, you have substantial reason to rejoice. But, O Sirs! such of you who are strangers to these things, are much to be pitied. From what has been observed,

4. Who can forbear lamenting the vain efforts of ignorant and self-sufficient men, to atone for their own transgressions, by their penances, fasting, self-denial, mortifications, &c. Whatever may be pleaded for these things *in themselves*,—viewed as a ground of real security, either from condemnation or from the fear of it,—they are no more sufficient than the grossest sins which such persons ever committed. No! no! Christ died not in vain. But in vain He would have died, if sinners could without His death have secured themselves from the condemnation due to them for sin.

Lastly, Let real believers *imitate the conduct of the Apostle*, and implore that lively faith in the death of Christ, which shall cause them to triumph over every fear of condemnation. Keep the eye of your faith upon the person of Christ in conjunction with the Father, as your great Deliverer. Especially view Him *as crucified* for you. Remember constantly the *great end* of His death—God's glory, and your eternal salvation. And O! may you practically acknowledge, more and more, your infinite obligations to the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed you to God, by His blood. Now unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen!

Ver. 34.

—*Yea, rather that is risen again*—

THESE words present us with an additional ground of the security of God's elect from condemnation. This is the resurrection of Christ. Upon this the Apostle puts a *rather*, as conveying some evidence, superior to that arising from the death of Christ, in favour of the exalted prerogative for which it is adduced as a proof.

Of the utmost consequence is the resurrection of Christ to our salvation. Its consequence indeed is so great, that, "if Christ be not raised, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins; and they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished," 1 Cor. xv. 17, 18.—In the belief of this important truth, then, we ought to be established; I shall therefore endeavour, first, to prove the *truth* of the resurrection of Christ; and then point out the *encouragement* which it affords to triumph over fears of condemnation.

I. The *truth*, &c. Those who were appointed to guard the crucified body of our Lord, were bribed to affirm, that, "while they slept, his disciples came and stole him away," Mat. xxviii. 13. On which words, *Austin*, and from him others, have observed, that, "Either they were awake or they were not: If they were awake, why should they suffer the body to be taken away? If asleep, how could they know that the  
disciples



disciples took it away?"—This may serve as a specimen of the ordinary objections made to many religious truths; and a similar observation may be made on the malicious slander sometimes vented against religious characters, that, "Notwithstanding their sanctimonious pretences to extraordinary piety, they can commit *secret* wickedness as much as others." But, if their wickedness be *secret*, how should their commission of it be *known*? And if *known*, how could it be *secret*? Who can reconcile such contradictory nonsense? But, alas! no matter in the estimation of many how false or foolish their invectives are, provided they are sufficiently bitter and injurious.

From this short digression I return to the subject, but must observe, that I cannot pretend to offer any *new* evidence in support of the truth of the resurrection of our Lord. By good men our attention hath been invited to the *nature* and *number* of the witnesses of this truth; the *time* and *place* of their testimony; together with the remarkable *success* which attended the propagation of this doctrine.—Let us accept this invitation, and attend a few moments to these respective objects.

1. *The Witnesses.* *Who*, and *how many* were they? To the *first* of these enquiries we answer, they were men destitute of *eloquence* to *persuade*, *power* to *compel*, *authority* to *influence*, and of *riches* to *reward* the belief of a falsehood. Without these ordinary requisites to impose upon mankind, could they have gained the least credit to their testimony concerning the resurrection of our Lord, had it not been an absolute

absolute fact? To the *second* enquiry we answer, they were,—St. Paul, the rest of the Apostles, and above five hundred brethren beside, 1 Cor. xv. 5—8. Notwithstanding the different capacities and peculiar tempers of these witnesses, their testimony was perfectly unanimous, nor was ever one found who contradicted himself, or who impeached his accomplices. Nor had they the most distant prospect of either honour, pleasure, or profit (the usual incentives to imposture), to encourage them to propagate a falsehood.—They appear altogether disinterested, and persist in their testimony, and seal it with their blood. We may well, therefore, with *Dryden*, demand,

Whence but from heaven, should men unskill'd in  
In different periods born, in different parts, [arts,  
Weave such agreeing truths, or how or why  
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?  
Unask'd their pains, ungrateful their advice,  
Starving their gains and martyrdom their price.

Consider, 2. The *time* and *place* of their testimony. The *former* was when the fact was quite *recent*, and capable of an easy refutation if false. With regard to the *latter*, it was not in some far distant country where exact information could not be obtained, but upon the *very spot* where the fact was accomplished. Would they, if impostors, have adopted such measures as these, the most effectual that could be to defeat their designs? This is not probable. We add,

3. The *remarkable success* attending this doctrine. God bore indisputable testimony to the resurrection of His Son, by the instantaneous  
infu-

infusion of supernatural ability to the Apostles to testify in *thirteen different languages* this important truth; and by signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. In one discourse *three thousand* were convinced of this truth, and fled to the risen Saviour for salvation \*. Wherever the Apostles spread this doctrine, astonishing conviction of its truth was produced, and the most singular changes in men's minds and manners effected. "Idols (as *Claude* affirms) fell; temples were demolished; oracles struck dumb; the reign of the devil abolished; the strongest inclinations of nature diverted from their course; people's ancient habits changed; old superstitions annihilated; all the devil's charms, wherewith he had stupified mankind, were dissolved; people flocked in crowds to adore Jesus Christ, &c. It is not enough to say, *This is the finger of God*: We must rather exclaim, *This is the outstretched arm of the Lord!*" And would God do all this in favour of a falsehood? If not, the consequence is undeniable, that *the Lord is risen indeed!*

To the preceding testimonies, no objection can be made but what proceeds upon the supposition, That we are to believe nothing but what we ourselves see or hear — A supposition this, as is unworthy of a moment's regard. We therefore proceed to consider,

II. The additional encouragement which the resurrection of Christ affords for triumph over every fear of condemnation. Upon this, the Apostle puts *a rather*, thereby intimating that some superior evidence of our security from con-

\* See Acts ii.

demnation



demnation arises from it, to what arises from the death of our Lord,

The resurrection of Christ is to be considered as a *divine evidence* of the perfection and acceptance of His atoning sacrifice; and as *actually influencing* our justification.

1. It was an *evidence*, &c. Although we might have reasonably concluded from the *dignity of His person* that Christ's obedience and sufferings were of infinite sufficiency for the purposes of our complete justification and consequent security from condemnation; yet, additional confirmation is given to our faith concerning both these, by His *resurrection*. For had He not fully accomplished every requisition of law and of justice for us as our Surety; He had been detained a prisoner in the gloomy dominions of death till now. But, our Jesus who was dead, is risen and alive for evermore! Boldly may faith plead for the cancelling of the bond against us, having the resurrection of Christ to shew, that our debt is fully discharged. It is on this firm foundation that the Apostle triumphs in our text, and in the 15th of his first Epistle to the Corinthians; where he thanks God for victory over death and the grave, through our Lord Jesus Christ, as risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them who slept.

2. The resurrection of our Lord *actually influences* our justification. To make the import of this influence as intelligible as possible; it must be observed, that, in addition to the office of a *Surety*, Christ sustained the office of a *Representative* also, or common person, representing

ing the whole body of the elect; that, *as such*, He was justified in His resurrection; and consequently His people were then justified in Him.

1. That Christ sustained the character of *Representative* of His people, is obvious from the contract formed between Him and Adam, mentioned in Rom. v. 14. and 1 Cor. xv. 47. In the former of these passages, Adam is called "the figure," or (as it is in the original) the *type* "of Him that was to come," that is, Christ; in the latter, Adam is called the *first man*; our Lord, *the second*. The Apostle speaks of them as of the only two men existing, and for what other reason but because they were both Representatives, the former of *all men*, the latter of *all the elect*? Adam was *so* the representative of his posterity, that the sin he committed, and the sentence passed upon him for it, is said, the former to be done, the latter to be sustained by them. See Rom. v. 12. 18.

In a similar manner was Christ the Representative of God's elect, so that what *He* did, *they* were considered to have done; and what was done to *Him* was done to *them*. When therefore *He* died, *they* died; and when *He* arose, *they* arose also. As Christ for the sin of His people was condemned in His death; so was He also,

2. *Justified in His resurrection*. It was meet that some *act of acquittal* should take place in our blessed Redeemer, upon His perfectly discharging our debt. And it is an eternal truth that such an *act* *did* take place, for as He "*was made sin, and did bear the sin of many*;" so we are informed that He shall appear the second time

time *without sin*, Heb. ix. 28. and of course there was a period when a perfect discharge from it took place. That period was His *resurrection*; for as He was "*put to death in the flesh*"; so was He *quickened by the Spirit*," 1 Pet. iii. 18. or power of His Godhead; and this *quickening* (meaning His resurrection), the Apostle Paul considers as equivalent to being *justified*, when he informs us that "God our Redeemer was manifest in the flesh, and *justified in the Spirit*," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Our blessed Lord himself seems to have viewed His resurrection in this light, when, in prospect of condemnation in His death, He derived consolation from the thought of His resurrection as the appointed period of His justification. See Psa. xvi. 9. 10; Acts ii. 31. We observe,

3. That Christ in His resurrection was justified *as the Representative* of His people, and consequently they were virtually and irrevocably justified in Him. Whatever act of grace God exercises towards His people, He primarily exercised towards His Son as their Representative. Thus for our sakes, Christ was *justified*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. and *sanctified*, John xvii. 9. because we were to be so. And all spiritual blessings to be communicated to us, were originally communicated to Him, so that we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings *in Him*; and *with Him*, freely receive all things." Thus as in Adam all his posterity were condemned; so in Christ all his people are justified. And as the sentence of condemnation passed *first* upon Adam, and from him to all his posterity; so justification passed *first* upon Christ, and from Him to us.

We



We are, however, to observe, that this *virtual* justification in Christ does not preclude, but, on the contrary, renders eventually certain, our *actual* justification through faith in His atonement and righteousness. Dr. Goodwin very properly observes on this subject, that, “As in Adam we were all virtually condemned (*in Adam all die*), and yet we are not actually in our own persons condemned, till we are born of Him; nor do we personally die until we lay down our own flesh: Even so it is in the matter of our justification; it was done virtually in Christ, and afterwards when we believe, is actually passed in and upon ourselves.”

On all the preceding accounts, the Apostle, with great propriety, affixes a *rather* to the resurrection of Christ, as affording additional cause to triumph over *every fear* of condemnation.

Permit me, my friends, to enquire, what evidence you possess of interest in the resurrection of Christ? Such who are actually interested therein, are *begotten again unto a lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3. they *fix their affections on things above*, Col. iii. 1. Phil. iii. 20, 21. and are *steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 57. By these rules impartially examine yourselves.

Let every believer be concerned to triumph in the resurrection of Christ, as in the most joyful event which ever took place. The day on which it occurred is expressed in scripture, as most deserving of joyful commemoration, Psa. cxviii. 24. And no wonder! For then it appeared that His obedience and sufferings were perfect, and fully accepted: That the sting of Death  
was

was taken away, and the victory from the grave. His resurrection was a sure evidence of the resurrection of our *souls* to spiritual life here; and of our *bodies* to eternal life at the last day. In full and certain hope of a joyful resurrection, may we now commit the remains of our pious friends to the grave; and look on it and death ourselves with Christian triumph. "Death is no more the king of dread since our Immanuel rose." He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies; and when Christ, our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. Under all accusations of conscience; painful bereavements by death; and in prospect of our own, under sickness and pain—let us resort by Faith to the grand article of the resurrection of Christ, as a source of strong consolation. May we daily experience *the power of His resurrection*; and sincerely render thanks,—eternal thanks, to God, for complete victory over sin, death, and the grave, through our Lord Jesus Christ!

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Ver. 34.

—Who is even at the right hand of God—

OUR gracious God is willing that His children should possess *strong consolation* in the assured belief of His favour towards them in Christ Jesus. For the production of this belief, he hath afforded the most substantial and permanent

manent grounds. *Two* of these have been considered; the death and resurrection of our Lord. We now proceed to consider a third—the session of Christ at the right hand of God.

This necessarily supposes His previous *ascension* thither. And as His *ascension*, as well as His *sitting at God's right hand*, witnesseth and influenceth the everlasting security of God's elect from condemnation, it is proper that we should consider *both*. This therefore we shall attempt; keeping in view the important object, in support of which, the Apostle adduces the various acts of Christ enumerated in the verse under consideration. That object evidently is—the perfection of our justification and consequent security unto life eternal. Let us then attend to,

I. Christ's *Ascension*. This was typified under the Old Testament in *Joseph's* advancement to the throne of Egypt, and in the *ark's ascent* to mount Zion, recorded 2 Sam. vi. and 1 Chron. xiii. 6. On which occasion the 24th Psalm was composed. In the New Testament it is positively *asserted*, Heb. i. 3. and iv. 14. and viii. 1. and xii. 2. *testified* by eye witnesses, Acts i. 9. and was *confirmed* by the extraordinary effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 33.

The *evidence* arising from the ascension of Christ in favour of his having obtained eternal redemption for His people, is obvious,

1. From the act He performed *immediately preceding* His ascension. This was—*authoritatively blessing* His disciples, Luke xxiv. 50, 51. As a *Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek*, Heb. vii. 17. who blessed Abraham, Gen. xiv. 19. and in him, all the faithful as yet in his



loins (as Lévi was said to pay Melchisedek tithes in the loins of Abraham, Heb. vii. 9, 10.), our blessed Lord, in conformity to His type, solemnly blessed His Apostles, and in them, *all the elect*, as these words, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20. necessarily imply. Now, *true* blessedness, according to the Psalmist, Psa. xxxii. 1, 2. consists in *forgiveness of sins*. Doubtless our Lord *truly* blessed the elect of God in the persons of the Apostles, and, consequently, this act was a substantial proof of the *absolute perfection* of His atonement, upon which alone forgiveness is founded. This encouraging truth is equally plain from,

2. The *circumstances* attending His ascension itself. He then *led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men*, Eph. iv. 8. Perhaps there is in these words an allusion to the custom of conquerors, who, in the day of their triumphs, had the enemies whom they had conquered, fastened to their chariot wheels; and then also they usually distributed gifts and rewards to their friends and soldiers.—So the Captain of our salvation, *having spoiled principalities and powers, sin, Satan, death, and the grave; he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in himself*, Col. ii. 15. And, with a generosity truly divine, He bountfully bestows the blessings of His purchase upon His faithful followers. He triumphed over them thus *as our Surety*; and we are hence authorised to triumph over every foe by faith in Him. To the above may be added,

3. His *entry* into heaven, as an additional proof of the full execution of the work given Him

Him to do on earth. Had He not, as our Surety, fully accomplished our everlasting security from condemnation—no admittance would he have received into heaven. But *His going unto the Father*, He Himself alleges as a proof of the sufficiency of His righteousness for the purpose of His people's perfect justification. John xvi. 9, 10.

The ascension of our glorious Lord, not only witnesseth the perfection of our justification in him; but has actual influence, from His character of Representative, for its production. In this relation, He is gone,

1. *To prepare a place for us.* “In my Father's house,” saith he, “there are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you.” John 14. 2. By the mysterious providence of God, *Joseph* was sent before to prepare a place for his brethren in Egypt; and by sovereignly rich grace, our Redeemer ascended to prepare mansions for us in heaven, that “where He is, we might forever be,” John xiv. 3. There we shall be divinely welcomed, for it is *His Father's house*; and there is ample room for us all there, for it contains *many mansions*. He also,

2. *Took possession, in our name*, as our Representative and *Forerunner*. As such, He enrolled our names in heaven, Heb. xii. 23. as the predestined possessors of those mansions, which are in sure reversion for us, 1 Pet. i. 4. As the Jewish high priest, the representative of the tribes of Israel, entered with their names on his breastplate, into the holy of holies, Exod. xxviii. 29. So our blessed Jesus hath *for us*, Heb. vi. 20. entered heaven; hath taken possession in our

name, and thus secured our future entrance there; this is more than merely to prepare us a place.

Thus, by divine faith, we rise far above mere pardon and freedom from condemnation; and may consider ourselves as virtually already in heaven, and be assured that at death we shall go to it as to our *own place*.—I proceed to consider,

II. Christ's session at God's right hand. This subject we shall consider in the same manner with the preceding, and observe,

1. That it also affords *considerable evidence* of the perfect security of God's people from condemnation.

Liberty to sit at the *right hand* is mentioned in scripture as a token of special favour, and of the highest honour. For this reason, Solomon placed his mother there, 1 Kings ii. 19. and thus does Christ the church, his Queen. Psa. xlv. 9. In reference to God, this position was allowed none but his own Son; for, *to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand?* Heb. i. 13. It appears, therefore, that God hath *highly exalted Him*.

The posture in which the text represents our blessed Redeemer, being a posture of *rest*, supposes His complete accomplishment of the work of our redemption; as God, upon finishing the work of creation, is said to have *rested*, and beheld the whole with complacency, Gen. ii. 2, and i. 31. The *standing* of the Jewish high priests was, according to the Apostle's account, Heb. x. 11, 12. an indication of the insufficiency of their sacrifices to expiate sin, and, consequently, *the opposite posture* of our great High



High Priest, must denote the infinite efficacy of His sacrifice for the sins of His people. Moreover, *as sitting at God's right*, denotes the highest possible honour to which our Lord is now exalted, it is a certain proof, that God is *well pleased for his righteousness' sake*, Isa. xlii. 21. and also with us in Him.

2. From some certain prerogatives implied in our Lord's sitting at the right hand of God; and his character as our Representative there, it will appear that this His situation has considerable *influence* also on our final complete and eternal salvation.

One of these prerogatives is—*the possession of all power in heaven and earth*, Mat. xxviii. 18. In this sense, our Lord himself explains His sitting at the Father's right hand, Mat. xxvi. 64. Now, amongst the various purposes for which he is invested with this power, this is one, *That he should give eternal life to as many as were given him*, John xvii. 2. He possesses *the keys of hell and of death*, Rev. i. 18. and hath shut for ever the gates of the *former* against His people, and will open for them those of the *latter*, by a joyful resurrection. He hath also the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Mat. xvi. 19. the everlasting doors of which he hath so opened for His people, that it is impossible for any one ever to shut, Rev. iii. 7, 8.

Another prerogative implied in the present situation of our Lord, is—that *all judgment is committed unto him*. Compare Prov. xx. 8. with John v. 22. Now, if *Christ himself* is Judge, is it possible that He should condemn *His own elect* for whom He *died*? Yea more, we are informed

that they shall be *assessors* with Him upon His throne, at the last day; and concur in every sentence which shall then be passed, Mat. xix. 28. Luke xxii. 30. 1 Cor. vi. 2. So that they must *condemn themselves* if condemned at all. But surely this is impossible, and consequently they are eternally safe.

Consider in the next place,—the *character* which our Jesus sustains at his Father's right hand.—It is that of *our Representative*; in consequence of which we are said *to be raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, Eph. ii. 6. He sits on the throne of the Majesty of heaven, not simply as a *Son*, but as *Head of the Church*. This title is expressly attributed to Him, Eph. i. 22. and doubtless He is not a *head* without a *body*; and consequently all his people, as members constituting a perfect body, shall assuredly sit for ever with Him.

Thus it appears, that the exalted dignity to which our blessed Lord is raised, affords substantial cause for triumph in certain security from condemnation, and should inspire assured hope of eternal life.—I shall conclude, as usual, with a few reflections.

1. We may infer from the infinite dignity, honour, and power, to which our Redeemer is exalted in heaven; *the impossibility of his interest or cause miscarrying on earth*. ALL power is his. In vain do earth and hell combine against His gracious purposes in behalf of His people. He hath *them* in His *hand*, John x. 23. and their *enemies* under his feet; and will safely bring His followers to their heavenly home.

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2. We must not forget that our Lord *suffered* before He entered into His glory, Luke xxiv. 26. nor sat down to rest in heaven, until His work was done on earth. Even thus must it be with us. We must suffer, before we reign with Him, 2 Tim. ii. 12. Nor expect for ever to rest from our labours till death, Rev. xiv. 13. But O! *one moment's* enjoyment of heaven will amply compensate all our troubles in the way thither; for consider,

3. What a beautiful *specimen* is presented you in the exalted Jesus of *your own future glory and honour!* You are to *sit with him on His throne*, Rev. iii. 31. *to appear with him in glory*, Col. ii. 3. *to be for ever with Him, beholding His glory*, John xvii. 34. *and seeing Him as He is, be perfectly conformed to His glorious image*, 1 John iii. 2. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Let the grandeur and greatness of this high prize encourage you to run with patience the race which is set before you; looking unto Jesus, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the hand of the throne of God, Heb. xii. 1, 2.

4. Let the infinite glory and majesty of our Redeemer produce *awful reverence in our approaches to Him.* John, who was most familiar with Him during His abode on earth, was struck with the most profound reverence when but a faint discovery was made of his present glory, Rev. i. 12—19. We ought to be concerned to possess a suitable degree of this reverence.

In a word, let the *friends* of this exalted Redeemer triumph; but let His *foes* tremble. He is armed with omnipotence to dash them to



pieces as the vessels of a potter, who persist in their refusal to have Him to reign over them. Be wise now, therefore, O thoughtless sinners! Be instructed, ye stout-hearted and far from righteousness! Yield homage to the Son of God, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way. When his wrath is kindled but a *little*!—blessed are all they that put their trust in Him, Psa. ii. 12.

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Ver. 34.

—*Who also maketh intercession for us.*

THESE words present us with what the Apostle seems to consider as the crowning argument of all, which he employs to assure God's people of their everlasting security from condemnation.

The number and magnitude of the arguments produced by the Apostle to suppress every rising fear of condemnation, supposes the occasional severity of those conflicts with Satan and unbelief with which the people of God are sometimes exercised. Those who have not yet experienced those conflicts, know not how soon they may be called to experience them; and ought to be found equipt with that armour with which we are furnished by the Apostle.

I shall endeavour to explain the *nature*, and *manner of accomplishment*, of our Lord's Intercession; and then prove its *efficacy* as affording additional encouragement to the faith of His people.

I. The

I. The *nature* of Christ's Intercession. The term *Intercession*, according to Dr. Doddridge, denotes, "An earnest address to one person on account of another;" and may be either *for*, or *against* a person. Elijah is said to have "made intercession to God *against* Israel," Rom. xi. 2. On the contrary, the text informs us, that Christ maketh intercession, or pleads, *for* us. "He poured out His soul unto death, and" in consequence thereof, "He made Intercession for the transgressors." Isa liii. 12.

The intercession of Christ constitutes a material part of His priestly office. Our Redeemer *sits*, not only as a triumphant *King*, but as a "Priest upon His throne," Zech. vi. 13. As a "Priest *for ever* after the order of Melchisedek, He hath an *unchangeable* priesthood," Heb. vii. 17, 24. And having already atoned for the sins of His people, it is obvious, that no other part of His priestly office can remain for accomplishment, but that of pleading the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice in a way of continued intercession that His people may fully enjoy the happy fruits of that sacrifice.

On the day of atonement (see Lev. xvi.) the Jewish high priest, with blood of the sacrifice which he had previously offered, taking with him a censer with burning incense, presented himself before the mercy seat. As incense often imports acceptable prayer to God, Psa. cxlii. 2. Rev. viii. 4. there is little reason to doubt, but that, with the grateful odour of the fuming incense, the high priest offered also his addresses to God in behalf of the hosts of Israel, while they

without, concurred with him in his intercession Luke i. 10.

Now these transactions are called "*patterns of heavenly things*," Heb. ix. 23. and naturally direct our thoughts to Jesus our great High Priest, who is at once "*the propitiation for our sins*," in his death; and our "*Advocate with the Father*," in His prevailing intercession, 1 John ii. 1, 2. He "*suffered without the gate*," Heb. xiii. 12. and entered afterwards "*into heaven itself, now appearing in the presence of God*," Heb. ix. 24. as our ever-living Intercessor, Heb. vii. 25.—With regard to,

II. The *manner* in which He intercedes for us, we observe,

1. That His very *presence* in heaven, is a *virtual* intercession for His people, Heb. ix. 24. This is happily illustrated by Mr. *Flavel* in the account which he gives us from a certain historian, of two brothers, one of whom, for capital crimes, was condemned to die; but upon the appearance of the others, who had lost an arm in the successful defence of his country, and the presentation of the remaining stump—the judges were so affected with a grateful recollection of his past services, as freely for his sake to pardon his guilty brother. Thus our dear Redeemer appearing "*on the throne as a Lamb that had been slain*," Rev. v. 6. "*with scars of honour in His flesh and triumph in His eyes*," silently, but powerfully, reminds His heavenly Father of His bitter sufferings, and the important design of them, even the eternal salvation of His people. Nor does He thus appear in vain. Through His wounds, the Father beholds with immutable favour,



favour, *the travail of His soul*, and faithfully accomplishes His covenant engagements in bringing them all successively to glory.—Our Lord intercedes,

2. By a *declaration of His will*, concerning the eternal salvation of His people. Our divine Intercessor is not to be considered as a *humble suppliant* soliciting a mere favour; but rather “*as a*” dignified “*Priest upon His throne*,” demanding for His elect the invaluable blessings procured by His death. His intercession is perfectly consistent with the administration of His mediatorial kingdom. “All power in heaven and earth is His.” He receives, and communicates to His people with divine authority, the invaluable blessings of His glorious gospel. If, in His state of humiliation, He could use *this* princely language,—“Father, *I will* that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory,” John xvii. 24.—much more may He be supposed to use such language *now He is infinitely exalted*. With His precious blood, “*which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel*,” He presents our persons and offerings with divine acceptance before His heavenly Father.

Many and great are the fruits of our Lord’s intercession for us. Thence originate—*our actual justification*. The *matter* of it was accomplished in His *death*; *virtually* it took place in His *resurrection*, and its *actual* commencement flows from His *intercession*,—*fresh applications of pardoning mercy*; agreeable to the doctrine of St. John, “*If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father*,” &c. 1 John ii. 1.—*Sanctifica-*

tion; as corresponding with the specimen of His intercession on earth, *keep them from evil; sanctify them through thy truth*, John vii. 15, 17.—*Strength against temptation*; what He did for Peter, He does still for all His people—“pray that faith might not fail in the trying hour,” Luke xxii. 31, 32.—*Perseverance*; “we owe,” says Dr. Goodwin, “our *standing* in grace every moment, to His *sitting* in heaven and interceding every moment.”—*Acceptance of our religious services*; they are acceptable to God, only as presented by our Advocate, with the much incense of His prevailing intercession, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Rev. viii. 3. And, finally, to the intercession of Christ we owe our hopes of eternal salvation, Rom. v. 10. Heb. vii. 25.—With regard to,

III. The *efficacy* of our Advocate's intercession; it might be evinced from a multiplicity of arguments. We shall take notice of those only which arise from—the *character* of the Intercessor—the *quality* of His plea—and the *subjects* for whom He intercedes.

1. The *Intercessor* is a person of infinite dignity. A “*great High Priest*.” As the *divine nature* gave efficacy to His death, it gives efficacy also to His intercession. He is infinitely—*dear to God*. “His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased.” He always heard Him when he was on earth, John xi. 42. and surely cannot disregard Him now He is in heaven. If the intercession of *Moses* and of *Job* were so prevalent with God as is recorded, Exod. xxii. 9, 10. Job xlii. 8.—how much more so must that be of His own dear Son?

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2. Consider the *justice* of His *plea*. He intercedes for no more than what He hath fully merited and may demand as a debt. He pleads for what is perfectly agreeable also to His heavenly Father to grant. The unity of wills and affections in Father and Son, renders it impossible for the latter to demand any thing that the former will deny. How gladly did *David* embrace the honourable opportunity afforded him by the artifice of *Joab*, of indulging the affectionate longings of parental tenderness towards his son? (See 1 Sam. xiii. 39. and chap. xiv.) And does not the intercession of our blessed Redeemer, by which the honour and dignity of our God is amply secured, give full scope for the exercise of His infinite love towards His dear people?—This introduces the consideration of,

3. The *persons* for whom our Lord intercedes. They are “God’s elect,” whom He loves with “an everlasting love.” For these, and for these *only*, John xvii. 9. does He plead; and hence the impossibility of failure of success in His execution of this gracious office. The least imaginable hint in behalf of those whom we cordially love, is sufficient to secure them what favours we can bestow.—Apply this thought to the present subject.

Allow me from the subject to remark, (1) *The folly of pretending to perfection in the present life*. Our having an “Advocate with the Father” supposes, according to St. John, the contraction of daily guilt, 1 John ii. 1. Let this consideration deeply humble, and induce us to renew our applications to “the fountain



tain opened for sin and uncleanness." (2) *How dishonourable is it to our blessed Jesus, to associate saints with Him, in the important office of intercession!* Such divided regard he considers as no better than absolute hostility to His honour and all-sufficiency, and will treat them accordingly.

Let the people of God derive from the intercession of Christ, encouragement, (1) *Under a sense of guilt and sinful infirmities.* He is the "propitiation for our sins," and as such is "our Advocate with the Father," 1 John ii. 1, 2. (2) *To come to God,* seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for such, and hence is able to save to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25. (3) *In their spiritual warfare,* since through Christ's intercession their faith shall not fail, Luke xxii. 31, 32. While Christ is on the mount you shall conquer in the valley, Exod. xvii. 11. (4) *To offer up prayer and praise though imperfect,* for the "much incense" of our Advocate will render them acceptable.

And, finally, from the *perpetuity* of Christ's intercession, His people may rest comfortably assured, that they shall never be permitted to apostatize from God, but shall hold on and endure to the end, and be eternally saved.

Oh may every believer be conscious of his obligations to this precious Advocate with the Father! Christ is not unmindful of you though infinitely exalted—let no elevation ever induce you to be unmindful of Him. Nor should you ever be backward to plead, with prudence and piety, *His cause on earth, who pleads yours in heaven.*

## Verses 35, 36, 37.

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

**B**Y a very natural transition, the Apostle proceeds from triumphing over *sin*, to triumph over *afflictions*. Our blessed Redeemer, by His obedience, death, resurrection, and intercession, hath rendered it impossible for *sin itself* to separate His people from His love—much less can *afflictions* accomplish this separation.

Though the Apostle speaks in the text, not expressly of *persons* but of *things*, yet he says not *what*, but *who* shall separate us from the love of Christ? Perhaps the reason is, because, Satan and evil men are implied as the principal instruments by whom God's people are exercised with the particulars enumerated.—By *the love of Christ*, it is obvious that the Apostle means Christ's love *to us*; for otherwise, it is most probable he would have demanded, "Who shall separate Christ from *our love*?" Besides, it does not appear, by any means, so proper to triumph in the constancy of *our love* to Christ, as in the constancy of *His* to us.

The text contains a *demand*, a *proof*, and a *satisfactory answer*.

The *demand* which is made concerning the *ability of tribulation, distress, persecution, &c. to separate*

separate from the love of Christ, supposes that His people are occasionally exercised with one, more, or all of these. This supposition is confirmed by a *proof* taken from the Old Testament, Psa. xliv. 22. intimating the merciless rage of their persecutors. But in the satisfactory *answer* which the Apostle returns to his own demand, he shews the impossibility of any weapon prospering which is employed against the people of God. On the contrary, through that very love, from which in vain their enemies attempt to separate them, they shall not only be conquerors, but even *more* than conquerors.

Thus in general we are taught, that “many are the afflictions of the righteous;” but that none of them can separate Christ’s faithful followers from his love. They shall finally triumph over all enemies and afflictions.—The most rapid inspection of these articles will, we hope, be productive, under divine influence, of encouragement to the suffering people of God.

I. Observe the *occasional conflicts of real believers* with diversified personal afflictions.— Sometimes they are exercised with *tribulations*, in the common course of providence, such as sickness, pains, poverty, losses, and disappointments. These grieve and oppress the *body*— Sometimes with *distress of soul*, under a painful sense of guilt; Satan’s temptations; the workings of remaining depravity; and the suspensions of the light of the divine countenance.— Sometimes with *persecutions* for conscience sake, injuring their reputation, liberty, or property.

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At other times they have been pinched with *famine*; starved with *nakedness*; exposed to the greatest *perils*; and have fallen victims to the *sword* of blood-thirsty rage. Such of whom the world was not worthy, have wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

You have, therefore, no authority my brethren, to imagine your trials strange or peculiar to yourselves. No temptations have befallen you but such as are common to believers in every age. Resist, therefore, by stedfast faith, all immoderate depression; knowing that the same, and sometimes far greater afflictions than yours, have been accomplished in your brethren which were in the world.

By afflictions our gracious God conforms us more and more to the image of his Son, Phil. iii. 10.—weans us from the world, Psa. cxix. 67.—calls forth the exercise of various graces, 1 Pet. i. 7. and manifests the all-sufficiency of true religion to support and compose the mind under the most afflictive dispensations, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. Hab. iii. 17, 18. By proper reflections on the utility of sanctified afflictions, you should be encouraged; especially from the consideration, that,

II. *No afflictions can separate you from the love of Christ.* To the most superficial observer it must be evident from the subjects preceding our text, that Christ loves His people with a love surpassing human comprehension. And blessed for ever be His precious name! His love, like Himself, is *immutable*, from which it is impossible for any person or thing to separate.

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On the contrary, it will make his people *more* than conquerors over all their enemies and afflictions.

*Conquest* supposes previous *conflict*; and every real Christian is a spiritual warrior. His enemies are numerous and formidable; and the weapons of his warfare are not carnal but mighty through God. These are—*the blood of Christ*. Thus the saints in glory are said to have overcome, “by the blood of the Lamb,” Rev. xii. 11. In His precious blood they were cleansed from all sin, and conquered all their guilty fears.—*Divine faith*. This is a shield against Satan’s fiery darts, Eph. vi. 16. and their victory over the world, 1 John v. 4.—*The word of God*. This is a sword, Eph. vi. 17. divinely tempered. A skilfulness in the use of this weapon, Heb. v. 13. secures victory over our most formidable enemies, as the example of our Lord, Mat. iv. fully proves. To the above we may add—*Prayer*. This our Lord prescribes as a preventative to entering into temptations, Mat. xxvi. 41. and has been often found of efficacy superior to any other of the Christian’s weapons of warfare. With these weapons, the hands of the believer are taught to war, and his fingers to fight, Psa. cxliv. 1. and through these, he may be confident of final victory.

But *simple conquest* is not all that believers may expect. They shall be *more* than conquerors.—Let us enquire into the *import* of this honour, and *whence* it originates.

1. To be *more* than conqueror, appears to imply—*Ability not merely to BEAR but to GLORY in the cross*. To *bear* it patiently is to conquer,  
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but to *glory* in it as Paul did, Gal. vi. 14. and Peter and John, Acts vi. 41. is to be *more* than conquerors—*To conquer even when conquered.* This, no victor but the Christian can boast. The text, after enumerating tribulation, distress, &c. adds, that in *all these things* we are more than conquerors. They rise by disgrace to honour, Gen. l. 20. and from intended ruin to safety and peace, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.—*That they conquer THEMSELVES.* For, “he that ruleth over his own spirit,” is more a conqueror, “than he that taketh a city,” Prov. xvi. 32. Many who have triumphed over others, have been slaves to their own unsanctified passions. But the grace of God in the Christian, subjects every thought to the obedience of Christ, and facilitates his victory over afflictions, by a previous victory over his carnal affections. Finally, believers may be considered as being more than conquerors, because they may be sure of victory as soon as the sword be drawn. The Christian is not authorised to indulge the uncertainty, expressed by a famous Dutch admiral in the morning of the day on which he fell a victim to war; —“This day I shall be crowned either with *laurel* or with *cypress.*” On the contrary,—from Christ’s victory as a sure earnest of the Christian’s, John xvi. 33.—the nature of his armour, rendering him invincible—and the positive promise of his God, Rom. xvi. 20. the real believer may be *sure* of victory the moment the conflict begins. On all the preceding accounts, God’s people may be considered as being *more* than conquerors.—But,

## 2. Whence



2. Whence does this honour originate?

*In the love of Christ.* 'Tis "through Him that loved us," saith the Apostle. The love of Christ prompts Him to employ His almighty power in our defence, and for our final victory. "By" human "strength shall no man prevail." The victory is freely given us through our Lord Jesus Christ. He hath conquered *for* us, and will conquer *in* us. He affords us every requisite to secure our complete triumph; His *example*, 1 Pet. ii. 21. *word*, 1 John ii. 14. and *spirit*, 1 John iv. 4.

As it is obvious from what has been observed, that every real Christian is a spiritual soldier, fighting under the banner of Christ the captain of his salvation, against the world, the flesh, and the devil; you ought to enquire impartially, whether you are of this honourable number or not. It requires "*striving to enter in at the straight gate*;" for such is the opposition made to those who would enter in, that nothing short of the possession of the *whole* armour of God can ensure success to their efforts. Cry earnestly to God to furnish you with this armour, that you, with all God's people, may come off more than conquerors.

May every believer be encouraged to prosecute with vigour the good warfare in which he is engaged. Remember, my believing brethren, that your *cause* is good, your *armour*, proof, your *Captain*, divine, your *prize*, inestimable, and your *victory*, sure. Your enemies in vain combine against you. Through faith you shall put to flight their armies. Through Him who hath loved them, even "*feeble saints shall win the day*,

day, though death and hell obstruct the way." O! rejoice in the animating prospects set before you, and practically acknowledge your obligations unto, and your dependance upon your glorious Leader.

And may God in mercy forbid, that such who at present "fight as those who beat the air, and spend their money for that which is not bread," should any longer persist in such absurd and dangerous conduct. Whilst the hardy veterans of Satan are forcing a passage to the flames, may you be enlisted under the banner of the Captain of Salvation, become good soldiers of Christ, and through free grace win the prize of eternal glory.

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Verſes 38, 39.

*For I am perſuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.*

**I**N this manner the Apoſtle terminates his triumph over every effort to ſeparate God's people from his love. He expreſſes the firmeſt confidence concerning the inability of the particulars which he enumerates to accompliſh this ſeparation. Nor was the ſource of this confidence peculiar to himſelf, but ſuch as may equally aſſure every true believer of the certainty of his ſurmounting every difficulty, and conquering

quering every foe which would prevent his joyful entrance into eternal bliss.

The text evidently contains these plain propositions—God loves his people through Christ—It is impossible to separate His people from His love. The truth of the

Ist of these propositions is so obvious, from the general contents of this chapter, as to preclude any additional argument in its favour. He hath manifested Himself to His people as their reconciled God, and bountiful benefactor, freely giving them Christ, and with Him all things. He is their infinitely gracious Father, who pities, pardons, and supplies His children. In a word, He is their God, and will be their eternal portion.

The love of God to His people is distinguished into various kinds, into that of—*benevolence*, or good will, Deut. xxxiii. 16. which indeed He exercised towards them in purpose and decree from eternity, and manifests in time by a love of—*beneficence*, or of operation for them; in their creation, preservation, conversion, perseverance, and eternal salvation. The bestowment of new covenant mercies by the love of beneficence, makes way for the love of—*complacence*, or of divine delight. God graciously makes His people comely with His own comeliness, Ezek. xvi. 14. and then delight in them for it, Sol. Song ii. 14. He delights in them as a father in his children, and rejoiceth over them as the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, Isa. lxii. 5.

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The *dimensions* of God's love are *illimitable*. A *height* to which none can soar. A *depth* which cannot be fathomed. A *breadth* immeasurable. And a *length* parallel to the line of eternity itself, being from everlasting to everlasting.

Its *properties* are admirable. It is infinitely *free*, Hos. xiv. 4. *great*, John iii. 16. *immutable*, Mal. iii. 6. Jam. i. 17. It is also *invincible*, surmounting effectually every obstruction to His people's eternal happiness; and hence we learn, that,

II. It is impossible to separate God's people from His love. *Death* cannot with all its terrors; nor *life* with all its allurements. Evil *angels* strive in vain, as well as their agents, *principalities*, or crowned tyrants, who, instead of being "nursing fathers," have often been murdering butchers to the church of God. Civil *powers* or persecuting magistrates cannot; nor indeed any thing present or future. Neither the *height* of honour, nor the *depth* of disgrace, nor any thing whatever, shall separate God's people from His love.

From these premises, Divines have inferred and supported the important doctrine of what is termed *the invincible perseverance of the saints*: A doctrine against which considerable opposition has been made; how justly, will appear from what we shall offer upon this subject.

We readily grant that *seeming grace*, *great gifts*, and *promising appearances*, may be totally and irrecoverably lost. Persons may possess these in a very high degree, whose hearts are far from being right with God. Witness those  
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mentioned by the Apostle in the sixth chapter to the Hebrews. Some of the *Galatians*, *Hymeneus*, *Philetus*, and others, come under this class. Concerning the apostacy of these, and such like, the Apostle John assigns a sufficient reason: "They went out from us, but they were *not of us*; for if they had been of us, *they would no doubt have continued with us*: But they went out, that they might be *made manifest that they were not all of us*," 1 John ii. 19.

We grant further, that the *exercise of real grace* may be suspended, as was the case with *David*, *Peter*, and others. Its *comforts* also may be withheld, as every believer well knows. What we maintain is, that the *principle of divine grace* in a believer's heart is *incorruptible*, 1 Pet. i. 23. and shall never be eradicated. Nor one for whom Christ died, finally perish, John vi. 39, 40. In support of this doctrine we adduce, the *acts and operations* of the grace of FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT.

1. GOD the FATHER hath, as we have proved on ver. 29.—(1) *immutably predestinated them to eternal life and all the means thereof, and consequently to final perseverance in faith and holiness*; so that their seduction is absolutely impossible, Mat. xxiv. 24. (2) *He gave them to Christ as a reward and price of His labour*, John xvii. 2. 6. nor is it possible that He should repent of this act and take them from Him. (3) *He has irrevocally promised the perseverance of His people and their final happiness*.—Accept a small specimen of His promises of these blessings. 1 Sam. xii. 22. "The Lord will not forsake his people. Psa. xxxvii. 28. He forsaketh

saketh not His saints they are *preserved for ever*. Isa. xlv. 17. Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an *everlasting salvation*; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world *without end*. Isa. liv. 10. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness *shall not depart* from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy upon thee. Jer. xxxii. 40. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that *I will not turn away from them* to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts; that *they shall not depart from me*. John x. 28. I give unto them *eternal life*, and they shall *never perish*, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. Phil. i. 6. Being *confident* of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you, *will perform it* until the day of Jesus Christ." (4) *The divine perfections are employed for this purpose.* Power, 1 Pet. i. 5. Wisdom, Jude xxiv. 25. Justice, 2 Tim. iv. 9. Faithfulness, Numb. xxiii. 19 and Mercy, Psa. lix. 10.

2. GOD the SON hath, (1) *Redeemed them with a price too precious to suffer one of them to be lost*, 1 Pet. ii. ix. Tit. ii. 14. (2) *He prevalently intercedes for their preservation from evil*, John xvii. 15. and safe arrival in heaven to behold for ever His glory, v. 24. and hence their faith cannot fail, Luke xxii, 32. (3) *He builds His church upon an impregnable rock*, Mat. xvi. 18. against which the gates of hell cannot prevail; and, *lastly, His people are indissolubly united to Him as their Head and Husband*, and hence "because He lives, they shall live also," John xiv. 19.

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3. GOD



3. GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, (1) *Takes up his eternal abode in believers.* "He shall abide with you *for ever*, says our blessed Lord, John xiv. 16, 17. He abides as a *Root* within, Mat. xiii. 21. a well of living water springing up to *eternal life*, John iv. 14. an Anointing which *abideth*, 1 John ii. 27. and a Seed which *remaineth*, 1 John iii. 9. (2) *He seals them unto the day of Redemption*, Eph. iv. 30. Which sealing denotes the indelible impress of the graces of which He is the Author, rendering the persons of the sealed, sacred to God as His unalienable property, Rev. vii. 3. He is also, (3) *The Earnest of our heavenly inheritance*, Eph. i. 14. and as such, fully ensures the future possession of that inheritance, for it is impossible that such an earnest can be either false or fallacious. Our blessed Lord assures us, Luke xv. 17. that, *joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*, &c. "Beatified Saints" (says a sensible writer) "exult, *Angels* clap their wings, and the whole united choir raise their voices and strike their golden harps, for joy that a soul is born of God and made free of the Jerusalem which is above.

"Such exalted hosannas would not resound, on these occasions, among the inhabitants of the skies, if the doctrine of *final perseverance* was not true. Tell me, ye *Seraphs* of light; tell me, ye *Sons* of elect men made perfect in glory; *why* this exuberance of holy rapture, on the real recovery of a single sinner to God? Because ye *know assuredly*, that every true conversion is (1) a certain proof, that the person converted is one of your own elect number, and (2) that  
he

he shall be infallibly *preserved* and *brought* to that very region of blessedness, into which ye yourselves are entered. The contrary belief would silence your harps, and chill your praises. If it be *uncertain*, whether the person, who is *regenerated* to-day, may ultimately reign with you in heaven, or take up his eternal abode among apostate Spirits in *hell*; your rejoicings are too sanguine, and your praises are premature. You should suspend your songs, till he *actually arrives* among you; and not give thanks for his conversion, till he has persevered unto glorification. But, they rejoice over him, knowing, that a sinner could not have *repented*, if he had not been *elected*: And that, as surely as he was elected, so surely shall he be *glorified*."

For the accomplishment of the final perseverance of real believers, God exercises the almighty power of His grace; the co operation of His providence; and excites them to the proper use of moral means; such as prayer, watchfulness, diligent use of ordinances, suitable regard to promises and threatenings, &c.

Properly understood, this doctrine will be found to glorify the infinite goodness and faithfulness of God; and also the infinite efficacy of the atonement and intercession of Christ. The *permanency* of gospel blessings is calculated to fill the believer's heart with joy; and to allure the profligate from the vain pursuit of lying vanities.

To imagine, as some do, that this doctrine supercedes the use of means, and encourages licentiousness, is such a gross perversion of it,

as can arise from nothing but total ignorance. *Means*, we have repeatedly observed, are as much appointed as the *end*; and you might with equal propriety maintain, that the certainty of food satisfying the cravings of appetite, and nourishing the body, encourages us to fast till we become skeletons; as to pretend that the doctrine which secures the continuance of God's people in faith and holiness encourages sin.—Before I conclude permit me to remind you,

1. That *saints* only shall persevere. If you sustain not in *reality* this character, your profession will sooner or later give up the ghost. It will prove like the grass upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up, for every plant which God himself hath not planted, shall be rooted up, Mat. xv. 13.

2. Saints *shall* persevere; and such ought to triumph in the certainty of their salvation, and prove their saintship by *actual* perseverance, making daily progress in faith and holiness. For this purpose, constantly renew your application to the fountain of all fulness, that you may happily increase with all the increase of God.

Thus we have attempted to consider the contents of this admirable chapter. May God of His infinite mercy bless these pages to those of His dear children who shall honour them with a perusal! Amen and amen!



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# INDEX

To some of the principal Subjects contained in this WORK.

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## A.

- ADAM* and Christ Representatives, 261.  
*Afflictions* of God's people many and great, 280, 281.  
—— cannot separate from the love of Christ, 281, 282.  
*Ascension* of Christ proved, 265.  
—— its influence on justification, 265—267.  
*Assurance* of faith attainable, and ought to be attained, 120.  
—— how produced, 11.  
—— not of the essence of faith, 123.  
*Apostates* were never truly converted, 288.

## B.

- Believers*, how they become the sons of God, 105, 106.  
——, their security, 218.  
——, how known. 7.  
——, in what respects they shall be more than conquerors, 282.  
*Blessings*, divine, how to be received, 239.

## C.

- Calling, effectual*, what, 203.  
——, whence it derives its efficacy, 205.  
——, its properties described, 206.

*Carnal*

## I N D E X.

*Carnal* mind, its nature, properties, &c. 40—43.

———, what it comprises, 49.

*Condemnation*, what it is, 2.

——— *how* and *when* believers are freed from it, 3—5.

*Conformity* to Christ, evidence of interest in Him, 124.

———, in what it consists, 196.

———, a fruit of faith, 29.

*Converting* grace invincible, 208.

*Creation* will probably be restored to its primitive state, 147—150.

### D.

*Death* of Christ, a channel for divine blessings, 257.

———, a threefold view of it, 250—252.

———, a dilemma of Dr. Owen's concerning its extent, 253, 254.

*Death*, not a penal evil to believers, 71, 72.

*Doubts* often trouble believers, 118.

———, their causes, 63. 119.

### E.

*Elect* of God cannot be *effectually* charged, 243—245.

*Encouragement* to the penitent, 25. 113.

——— to the weak in faith, 163.

*Enmity* against God, its nature, properties, evidences, &c. 49—54.

*Evidences* of being the children of God, 219, 220.

### F.

*Faith*, Christ the great Exemplar of its exercise, 241, 242.

*Favour* of God, how manifested, 227, 228.

*Flesh* and Spirit what, with their respective fruits, 7, 8. 35, 36.

*Fruits* of the Spirit, what, 156.

———, why called *first* fruits, 158.

### G.

*God* the sole Author of salvation, 20.

*God,*

## INDEX.

*God*, how He accomplishes salvation, 21—23.  
*Glorification* described in its nature, &c. 220—223.  
*Glory* to be revealed, its greatness, &c. 137.  
*Grace* and *glory* differ not in essence but only in degree, 158.

## H.

*Heart*, God's perfect knowledge of it, 179, 180.  
*Help*, how the Spirit helps our infirmities, 172, 173.  
*Hope*, its efficacy, fruits, and effects, 165—169.

## I.

*Inheritance* how conveyed to the saints, 125.  
*Intercession* of Christ, its nature and fruits, 272—277.  
*Justification* explained and proved, 210—218.  
—— distinguished from sanctification, 211.  
—— obviates every charge, 245.

## L

*Law* of the Spirit, and of sin and death, what, 10, 11.  
—— how the former frees from the latter, 13.  
—— moral, of immutable obligation, 15.  
—— cannot justify, 18, 19.  
—— should be preached for conviction, 114.  
*Leading* of the Spirit, what, 102—104.  
*Life* and peace, their import, 44, 45.  
*Love* of God, its kinds, dimensions, and properties, 286.  
—— to God, its nature and fruits, 193, 194.

## M.

*Men* distinguished by their principles and practices, 31—35.  
*Mortification* of sin, its nature, &c. 97—99.

## P.

*Predestination* proved and defended, 196—202.  
*Privileges* and obligations united, 8, 9.

*Perseverance*



## I N D E X.

*Perseverance* proved and defended, 288—292.

*Prayer*, its rule, 185. How it becomes acceptable, 186.

## R.

*Regeneration*, its necessity, 38.

*Requisites* for the acceptable service of God, 58—60.

*Resurrection*, its importance and truth, 80—84.

——— of Christ proved, 256—260.

——— its influence on our justification, 260—262.

## S.

*Saints*, to whom that appellation belongs, 185, 186.

*Sanctification* included in glorification, 219.

*Satisfaction*, none in the creature, 152, 153.

*Spirit* of bondage and of adoption, what, 110—113.

—— of Christ resides in believers, 64—69.

## U.

*Union* with Christ twofold, 6, 7.

## F I N I S.

6 FE 67

